

THE TORCH BEARERS



BERNARD MARSHALL



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THE
TORCH BEARERS



NOT FOR YEARS HAD HE FOUND HIMSELF SO MUCH IN THE MOOD OF A
SCHOOLBOY ON A STOLEN HOLIDAY

[Page 45]

THE TORCH BEARERS

A TALE OF CAVALIER DAYS

BY

BERNARD MARSHALL

||
AUTHOR OF "CEDRIC THE FORESTER,"
"WALTER OF TIVERTON," ETC.



*To you from failing hands we throw
The torch. Be yours to bear it high.*



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TO
MY MOTHER
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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THE TORCH BEARERS

CHAPTER I

AT THE ACADEMY OF THE RAPIER

THE afternoon sunlight of an April day slanted through the dusty windows of a great vaulted hall that, in the days of stout Henry the Eighth a century gone, had been the boast of a proud mansion near the western verge of London town. Now the fortunes of its inheritors had fallen, and the old timbered dwelling, like its neighbors on either side, had come to low estate. A dozen or more lodgers occupied its upper chambers; a tobacconist had opened a shop in the room whence my lady and her friends in ruff and farthingale had been wont to view the passers-by in the muddy street below; and Monsieur La Salle—"gentleman of France and the world—soldier, scholar and instructor of youth"—had established in this apartment of olden state his "Academie de la Rapière." Here he daily received the aristocratic youths of the town who came to perfect themselves in the mastery of sword and pistol.

A noisy group of these scions of nobility and fashion, ranging from boys fresh from the dame's school to tall fellows of one and twenty with their first mustachios, surrounded a pair of fencers, who

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danced and whirled about each other in the center of the hall. Monsieur La Salle was for the time engaged in another room with the son of a ducal house, who had come that day for his first lesson. His other pupils had been left to exercise themselves meanwhile in all the thrusts and parries he had so thoroughly explained and illustrated, and above all in "ze incomparable passado La Salle." Half a dozen well-matched pairs had been arranged amongst the lads, and the opening pose of each had been reviewed and corrected with military precision. Then, with parting injunctions, animated by many gestures, frowns and smiles, Monsieur had departed with his new pupil to the smaller and more elegant apartment on the second floor which was reserved for the private and particular instruction of youths of high degree. But all the single combats in the hall save the one that now held the floor had long been abandoned and the lads crowded closely about to watch an epochal contest.

Both the swordsmen were panting for breath, and the sweat poured down their faces, for, with but one or two brief pauses, the bout had already lasted an hour or more. But Arthur Hinsdale, the taller and slighter of the two, still held himself on his toes like a dancer, springing suddenly from side to side and encircling his antagonist with darting runs and feints the while he sought some avenue for his swift and oft-repeated thrusts. The glossy black ringlets that, in the fashion of the day, he wore at shoulder length,

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now flew about in wild disorder; his handsome face was fiery red and distorted by a frown more suited to a mortal combat than to a friendly tilt with safely buttoned foils; and his sky-blue silk waistcoat was moist with perspiration and in more than one place had been torn by his opponent's foil.

Hinsdale's antagonist was a youth of twenty or thereabouts, a hand's breadth shorter than himself, but more than a little broader at the chest and hips. He was of a powerful frame indeed, with solid, oaklike thighs and the long, sinewy arms of a swordsman, now bared to the very shoulders. A pair of gray-blue eyes lighted a countenance that was intelligent and forceful rather than handsome; and a broad, good-humored mouth and square-built jaw were in striking contrast with the slighter features of his opposite.

Six months before, Myles Delaroche had come to London from his father's small holding of Grimsby in the West Country, and made his appearance at the Academie of Monsieur La Salle. At the first, his lack of skill with the small sword, together with his sober, half-Puritanic dress and his uncurled, flaxen locks, cut squarely at the neck, had excited the derision of these town-bred lads. Covert jibes, that grew more open as they seemed not to be noticed, greeted his slightest failures or mistakes. At last the recognized leader, Arthur Hinsdale, younger son of Sir William of Hinsdale and London, half mockingly offered to lesson the country youth. His offer was accepted with

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such grave courtesy that, for very shame, the young Londoner could not do otherwise than fence a bout or two with the newcomer. He had not prevailed so easily as might have been expected from the stranger's awkwardness of posture; and, after a second tilt a week later, Hinsdale admitted that Delaroche had a wrist, and might learn a pass or two in time.

Since that day he had not crossed foils with the Roundhead, as, behind their hands, the lads called the broad-shouldered Westerner; and had indeed been absent for weeks at a time from the fencing school. Myles, on the other hand, had never missed, on a week day, his afternoon visit to the old mansion in Willoughby Road. Thus he had spent a good three hours daily with either foil or pistol in hand. On this April day, he had coolly challenged the acknowledged champion.

With a bored and superior smile, young Hinsdale had accepted. Without stopping to remove his doublet or to don the leathern breastguard, he had plucked a foil from the rack, made a deep, mock-serious bow to the challenger, and then advanced toward the West Country youth with a dancing step imitated from a favorite comedian.

Now it seemed that the tables were turned. In the course of half an hour, the mocking smile had given place to a look of surprise, then to one of irritation and finally to one of furious rage. Hinsdale had tried, one after the other, nearly every trick of fence

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he knew. Each had been met with its proper parry; and twice the button of the Westerner's foil had bruised his ribs. The crowd that swayed and cheered about them grew riotous with excitement.

"A hit!" shouted one, as the silken doublet was ripped again by a well-directed blow. "By Heaven! Hinsdale, he gives you a scurvy deal to-day. 'Tis three times now, and no return."

"You lie like a pickthief," screamed Hinsdale, still circling madly about his opponent and striking wild and futile blows. "'Twas no hit—naught but a graze that counts for nothing. Come on again, you West Country yokel. I'll swear you never can repeat."

The other had momentarily lowered his weapon; but at this rude challenge he stepped quickly forward and seized the offensive. Blade smote against blade at bewildering speed; both contestants seemed at once to thrust and parry; and the swish and clang of steel for the moment drowned the laughter and jeers of the onlookers. Forced by this determined onslaught to abandon his tactics of swift and varied attack, and well-nigh exhausted as he was, Hinsdale still fought doggedly on; and, though driven backward step by step the full length of the hall, yet managed to guard his breast against the stroke that meant defeat. Around and around the room they fought, their teeth clenched and their eyes staring. Young Hinsdale fairly staggered with weariness, and his breath came with quick, hoarse gasps like those of a foundered

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horse. The onlookers, in their eagerness to see the outcome of this mighty bout, ceased their fire of boisterous comment, and pressed closely about the fencers or sprang nimbly away from the flashing blades.

For minutes together the rivals stood thrusting and parrying with all their remaining strength in a corner of the hall to which Hinsdale had been driven by his opponent's steady advance. Here was no opportunity for the sidewise leaps and runs upon which he so much depended to confuse an adversary's aim; and his breath was too far gone for such tactics even on the wider floor. Delaroche was pressing his vantage to the utmost. All through the bout he had saved his breath for the work in hand, had taken no steps save those necessary to keep his nimbler antagonist before him and had spoken no word at all. Yet he found it impossible to penetrate again the young Londoners' defense; for this, though lacking, because of weariness, the spring and verve of his usual style, was still that of a swordsman born, and left no opening through carelessness or blundering.

Ever since Hinsdale's ill-timed boast and defiance, the West Country youth had held the offensive; but now, with a last desperate effort, the Londoner regained it, and brought into play a feint and pass that had never before failed him—the *passado La Salle* itself. This wonderful stroke their instructor had twice assured them had been completely mastered by no other than Hinsdale among all his pupils. But the

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speed and nerve on which its successful execution depended were his no longer. His blade was swept aside in a perfect parry; and he received a thrust, full on the breast bone, and so violent as to leave no doubt in any mind as to the outcome of the contest.

Dashing his sword on the floor, Hinsdale flung himself on a bench near by, and, between gasps for breath, gave utterance to a series of furious oaths. His opponent meanwhile stood coolly leaning on his foil, three paces distant, making no reply to these mouthings, and steadily regarding him. For a moment Hinsdale paused and panted. Then, glaring at Delaroche with bloodshot eyes, he snarled:

“You crop-eared son of a Roundhead!—If you’ll stay but three minutes—till my breath returns—I’ll fight you again—and not with these toys either. We’ll take that pair of rapiers on the wall there. Then, when something more than play depends—we shall see who is the better swordsman.”

There was a murmur of admiration from the on-lookers. Hinsdale was a general favorite; and his spirited rejection of the very thought of defeat by this interloper had their full sympathy. Some of the younger lads turned to gaze in awe at the keen-pointed blades on the wall; but most of them looked eagerly at Delaroche to note his reception of the challenge.

In those eager and reckless days, those who styled themselves gentlemen stood ever ready to submit

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every quarrel to the instant decision of the sword. Edicts against dueling, both royal and municipal, were lightly set aside by the bravos of the streets and coffee-houses; and the weapons worn by all men above the rank of merchants or artisans as often drew their owners into needless brawls as they served to stay the hands of robbers or other lawless assailants. In such bloody work these fledgling Cavaliers were scarce behind their elders. Only a week before, the body of the Viscount Lavalee, a youth of nineteen, had been carried home by his fellows in a covered chair after he had received a mortal wound in such an encounter; and his antagonist had fled from England to escape the vengeance of the victim's relatives. Now the whole gathering in the old hall waited breathlessly for Delaroche's reply.

This did not come quickly. The young countryman stood for full half a minute gazing steadily at his antagonist. Then he began speaking, slowly, and in a low voice, though so clearly that none present failed to hear him plainly:

"I know not why I should strive to kill you, Hinsdale, because to-day, I have had the better of our swordplay. You have never wronged me, save for an ill word or two, nor I you that I remember."

"'Twill not be *you* will do the killing," cried Hinsdale, springing up from the bench and advancing threateningly. "'Tis another matter with bare swords than with these playthings, I warrant you. And now

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I doubt much whether such as you have the stomach for it."

Delaroche's broad and good-humored countenance grew redder than ever the heat of the contest had made it and, for a moment the muscles of his lower jaw were set like those of a bulldog that faces a rival. But again he waited before making reply, then spoke in no higher key than before:

"If I am Roundhead and yokel, then you, no less, are a fop and an idler. But I will not fight you for such a thing as this. We are not dogs or wolves to rend each other for mere savageness. I will not have your blood on my head for such a trifle as this dispute wherein your anger is such that you know not what you say. Neither shall you have mine, if I can prevent. Come, let us be friends again."

"Yah! Roundhead!" shouted a youth in a velvet double. "Give us another sermon, Brother Barebones."

"White-liver!" jeered another. "Bare steel is too cold, forsooth."

A chorus of yells and cat calls followed. But this was instantly stilled when Hinsdale, sweeping his arm about with an imperious gesture, called loudly for silence. A startling change had come over his countenance. Facing his comrades and supporters, he hoarsely shouted:

"Be still, you pack of baying hounds, and listen to me. *He is no white-liver*; and by Heaven! I will crop

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the ears of any that say he is. Delaroche is right, and we would do better to listen to him than to ki-yi like puppies baying the moon. For me, I leave this place for good, and find me a master swordsman who can teach me somewhat indeed, for it is evident that I learn nothing here."

Seizing his plumed hat and cloak from a nail near the door, the former leader huddled them on with haste and violence, and strode out of the door. The group of youths whom he had addressed remained silent and motionless from very astonishment. After a moment, Myles Delaroche walked slowly toward the rack where the foils were kept, and deposited his weapon in its proper groove. Then he, too, though more deliberately, donned hat and cloak and passed out of the building into the street.

CHAPTER II

THE KING'S REGISTRAR

MYLES walked but slowly through the spring twilight toward his uncle's house in Surrey Lane. The scene in which he had just taken part had far more deeply moved him than he chose to show. Hinsdale's contemptuous words had stung like a careless, half-intended blow from a riding whip; and a mighty effort had been necessary to keep his temper in leash. Myles had secretly admired the young Londoner from the first day of their acquaintance, and, despite his foppish ways, had cherished a belief in some hidden fineness in his nature—some vein of generosity and high-heartedness that, under right conditions, would make him the truest of friends. Now the remembrance of this unspoken thought served only to increase Myles' bitter vexation at this foolish and violent quarrel and the exchange of words that would make them enemies henceforth.

The truth was that in challenging Hinsdale to fence that afternoon, Myles' intention had been, not to defeat and humiliate him, but to show himself a worthy antagonist at the foils and thus a proper associate and

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comrade. Now he questioned bitterly whether he could have otherwise borne himself, and whether worse things were to follow. The reckless lads at the fencing school he well knew would do their worst to renew the broil whenever he and Hinsdale met; and another time it might be harder still to avoid a bloody encounter. Hinsdale had said that he would not return to La Salle's; but Delaroche had no belief that one whose skill had long been the school's proudest boast would persevere in such an intention when a bout or two with other fencers had restored his confidence. After much dejected thought, Myles half resolved to absent himself from the school in future lest this senseless rivalry end in fatal mischief.

These gloomy meditations led to other thoughts as to his general situation and prospects and those of his family that were hardly more cheering. As the young countryman strode onward through the muddy streets and lanes his brow was as furrowed and his air as grave and absent as that of a Puritan elder meditating on the ideal earthly commonwealth.

Early in the previous autumn, Myles' uncle by marriage, James Dalrymple of Surrey Lane, after a month's visit at Grimsby, had invited the lad to make his home at the great London house and to seek his fortune at the capital. There he would enjoy the vast advantage of his uncle's distinguished patronage. Master Dalrymple was a fat and pompous citizen of fifty-five, extremely proud of his third cousinship to

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an earl, and always dressed and barbered in the latest fashion set by His Gracious Majesty, King Charles the First. He held no less an office under the Crown than that of Registrar of Functions. For the performance of duties which might have kept an active clerk employed for a fortnight in the year he drew a handsome salary; and at court levees he wore with splendid dignity a wondrous shoulder knot of purple and gold.

What his service lacked in labor was more than made up by a fervid loyalty to "The Anointed King" and to all institutions established and maintained in his name. For "innovators and sectaries"—those who wished to set up the will of the rabble in opposition to that of the Crown and to foster dissent and the preaching of cobblers and clowns in place of the Established Church—he had only disgust and contempt. In speaking of them his language sometimes became as violent as that of the ragged agitators and exhorters whom he decried. Myles, whose parents were Puritans, and who already had views of his own on the relations of King and People, Church and State, had managed for six months to keep the peace with his uncle by avoiding all argument in the house and pretending indifference to such matters. This he was the more willing to do because of his Cousin Lucy. Lucy, Master Dalrymple's daughter by an earlier marriage than that with Myles' paternal aunt, was a slender girl of fourteen, with great black eyes and a passion for tales of chivalry and of ghosts in old manor

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houses. Her father frightened her when he launched one of his noisy tirades; and she had begged Myles never to contradict him.

Master Dalrymple's idea of success in life was evidently that of court preferment; and, from the day of Myles' arrival, he had never ceased to exercise all his diplomatic talents and all the prestige of his position in his nephew's behalf. He was determined to find for him what he called a stepping-stone in the form of a secretaryship to some great noble or a clerk's place in the Royal Household. But Myles himself had somewhat different ambitions, and had set to work in his own way to realize them. The younger son of an impoverished baronet had no career, he reasoned, save that which he made for himself; and for him the thought of a sinecure or other powder-and-gold-lace position held no attraction. If he could have but two years for study, he believed he could see his further course. Within two weeks of his coming to London he had established himself as a student of law in the office of a friend of his mother's family, Marcus Denby, Esquire, an old solicitor of unquestioned learning and honesty, in these latter days, with but a meager practice and therefore with abundant leisure to bestow on a pupil. There Myles spent all his morning hours in the reading of huge and dusty volumes and in lengthy discussions with his patron on Magna Charta and the traditionary rights of Parliament as the bases of English law and liberty.

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Uncle James, who considered the profession of law of doubtful gentility, had small sympathy with these proceedings. Though he willingly paid for Myles' tuition at the Academy of Monsieur la Salle, he refused to contribute a single guinea to the purchase of law books. Myles, knowing well that any money his father might send him could be but painfully spared, and being free from some of the prejudices that governed his associates, had for some time been intent on finding ways for earning such necessary sums for himself.

As he approached the Dalrymple mansion, his eyes were bent on the ground, and his thoughts were deeply engaged with his various perplexities, so he did not see Lucy as she stealthily emerged from the door and looked up only when she had approached on tiptoe within two or three paces. She was laughing and her eyes were shining with excitement.

"Oh, Master Wiseman!" she cried, seizing one of his hands in both of hers and running in circles about him like a Maypole dancer, "a body might run fairly away with you before you'd come from your reveries. Come, tell me these wonderful thoughts that make you forget where you're going. Had I not caught you, you'd have walked straight by, I'm sure, and had to ask the way back again."

"No," answered Myles, smilingly—for Lucy's laughing voice and tomboy pranks had already driven away his worries as a brisk autumn breeze sweeps

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away new fallen leaves—"I would surely have smelled those tarts you've been making and that now perfume the very street. They would have stopped me, I warrant you, for no mortal man could resist them."

"No, indeed, no man such as I have ever seen, and such a ravenous monster as you least of all. But you don't know the wonderful, wonderful news. And that's what I came out to tell you."

She had released Myles' hand, but continued to dance about him like a very woodland sprite, her eyes glowing with mischief.

"Well then, tell me, pray," said Myles.

"Oh, but I won't tell you, indeed. That would *never* do."

"Oh, Mistress Changeabout! Did you not say but now that 'twas for that you came to meet me?"

"No, no, *indeed*. I said I came to tell you that you didn't know the news, which is, as you see, a very different thing."

"Why, yes, you mischief-maker, I see the difference clearly enough. But when am I to learn this wonderful news—and what is it about?"

"It's about—Oh! You schemer, you almost made me tell it; and Father wants to tell you himself. He's gone to Lord Hampton's; but he'll be home soon; and he said no one was to tell you."

"Oh!" answered Myles, his enthusiasm rapidly declining, "I think he's found a post for me at the Palace."

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By this time they had entered the house and seated themselves on the settle in the drawing-room. But Lucy leaped up and began again her elfin dance, weaving in and out among the chairs and tables and pirouetting and curtsying like a maid on the village green.

"No, no!" she cried. "It's something much better than that. You're going to be grand, I tell you; and all the maids will look at you as you ride past; and I shall say—'Isn't he fine in—in all his pretty clothes? He's my Cousin.'"

"Pretty clothes?" began Myles. "I wonder——"

"Oh, I almost told you after all," gasped Lucy, "and there comes Father now. Now mind—you don't know a thing about it. If you do, he'll scold."

Myles had just time to nod in reply when the door opened and his uncle entered. Master Dalrymple too was glowing of face and evidently bursting with his news.

"Aha! there you are, sirrah," he began, beamingly, "I have some news for you, you lucky dog. Egad! If I'd had such a chance at your age, I might by this have been Lord Chamberlain. But tell me first how stand you in your exercises at La Salle's? Can you handle sword and pistol like a gentleman?"

"Passing well, sir," answered Myles, who had risen at his uncle's entrance and now stood at respectful attention. "To-day I somewhat bested Arthur Hinsdale at the foils."

"Arthur Hinsdale!" exclaimed Uncle James. "Why!

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I have heard he was the best at swordplay of all the lads that attend there. Monsieur la Salle said so himself. And often I have heard Sir William boast of the lad as a swordsman born."

"Yes, sir, but to-day, perhaps by good luck, I had the better of him."

"Well, well!" returned Uncle James, rubbing his hands gleefully, "that's very well indeed, for I had already claimed as much for you when one inquired as to your progress. And here we are to our good news! What say you, lad, to a lieutenant's commission in the Buckingham Guards?"

"A commission?" exclaimed Myles, "Why! I have never thought of it. And I supposed the officers of the King's Guard were taken from most noble and wealthy families, and that, indeed, such places were much contended for."

"So they are," cried his uncle, who was now striding importantly about the room, while Lucy had resumed her elfin antics as a dance of triumph, "so they are, Master Delaroche; but I have some influence with Lord Hampton, I can tell you. 'Tis now four weeks I have worked upon the plan, and but to-day I have succeeded. To-morrow morning I introduce you to Colonel Lord Hampton at the Palace, and before night the tailors shall be at work on your uniform. 'Tis something, I can say, to know one's way about at the Court and to have a reputation like mine for loyalty and sound judgment."

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Myles stood for a moment looking steadily at his uncle without making reply. His mind was a battleground of contending desires and ambitions. Before him was the necessity for the hardest choice he had ever yet made. On the one side were rank and position, the applause of his comrades and of these friends so anxious to aid him, and the opportunity for what might become a brilliant career. On the other side were poverty and obscurity, estrangement from his London friends and the making of his way alone. For choosing the hard and dubious road there was no reason save one so fantastic to the general view that he well knew most men of the world would laugh it to scorn. Yet half a minute had not passed ere his decision was made.

"Uncle James," he said, hoarsely, "I cannot accept this commission."

Master Dalrymple stopped short and wheeled about toward the speaker. His plump face, naturally ruddy with health and good living, turned red as fire.

"What's that?" he gasped.

Lucy's fandango came to an abrupt end, and she grasped a chairback for support while she stared with great eyes at Myles as if she feared he had lost his mind.

"I can't take this commission," repeated the miserable youth, "or any commission under the King. I—I suppose you won't understand me—but I'm going to try to make you. I can't make oath to support the

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King—and accept his money for my service—while he rules the land in defiance of the law and in contravention of the rights of Englishmen. He has levied taxes without the consent of the Commons. He has made the Courts his servants instead of the guardians of the people's rights, and he has over and again thrown men into prison against whom no legal charges have been made.”

With his eyes fixed and staring, Master Dalrymple had listened to this amazing speech while his countenance slowly turned to a purple hue and the veins stood out like twisted and knotted cords on his temples. At last words seemed to burst from him, like the missiles from an exploding bomb.

“Thou Roundhead cur! Dost know that the Tower and the block await those that speak such treason? And rightly too, sirrah. By Heaven, if thou wert not the nephew of my wife that's dead and gone, I'd have the Watch here forthwith.”

“Don't, Father,” cried Lucy piteously, “I cannot bear it. You'll bring on a stroke like Uncle Jeremy.”

But Master Dalrymple paid no heed to her, and continued his shouting tirade with an accompaniment of furious gestures.

“Thou'lt be a lawyer, forsooth, and skulk behind a desk whil'st others fight for Church and King. And hast good blood too, as any in the West. Thou'lt make thy ancestors turn in their graves for very shame.”

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"Sir," said Myles, proudly, "the first Delaroche was he who fought against King John, four centuries ago. And if our family chronicles tell the truth of it, he was born in a forester's cottage, and risked his all for these very rights of common men that now another King of England tramples on. If bad goes on to worse, in England here—as, with the King's obstinacy and proneness to listen to unwise counselors, is likely to happen—I think I will not shame my ancestor if I draw sword myself in a cause so like to his."

So choked with fury did James Dalrymple become at this incredible defiance that for ten seconds after he essayed to reply naught issued from his mouth but inarticulate growls and hisses. At last, however, he spoke plainly and in a voice to shake the doors:

"Get out of my house, thou Roundhead dog. Thou and thy sectary counselors and ragamuffin statesmen will defy the Lord's Anointed, will ye, and set up some ranting hedge preacher to govern in his stead! By all the Imps of Tophet! I'll have the constables here if you make not haste."

Lucy came and took her father by the arm and drew him toward a chair. Turning to Myles, she half whispered:

"Go, Myles. Go at once. I am afraid for him."

Myles instantly turned away and passed to the upper chamber which had been his. Ten minutes later, having donned hat and cloak and sword, he left the house with a small bundle containing all the rest of his pos-

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sessions, strapped like a knapsack on his back. At the corner of the lane he stopped for some minutes and looked back at the lighted windows, hoping to catch a glimpse of Lucy, but could see only the figure of his uncle that rapidly passed and repassed the great window. At last the young Puritan turned his face to the west and strode away into the darkness.

He had traversed not more than a square or two before he heard running feet behind him. Wheeling swiftly about, he clutched the hilt of his weapon, ready to draw if his pursuer proved to be one of the foot-pads so common on the darker streets and lanes of London. Of these it was said there were many who would kill a man for half a crown. But his follower was no other than Cousin Lucy, who now sprang forward and clutched his arm, sobbing the while and exclaiming over this miserable ending of a happy day.

"Oh, Myles!" she gasped, "how could you do it? To talk so of the King himself—and to Father too! How could you do it?"

"I had to say what was true," answered Myles, grimly.

"Oh, no, you didn't—not then, anyway. And I'll never forgive you for it. But now—you're going home, I suppose. And you haven't a bit of money, I know. So I brought what I had. Here's five guineas, in a little silk purse I made myself."

"Lucy," answered Myles, proudly, "I cannot take

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any money from my uncle after what has been said to-night."

"Oh, but this isn't from Father. It's from *me*."

"It comes to the same thing. No, Lucy, it was fine of you to bring it; but I can't take it. Give me a kiss instead for good will, and I'll do well enough."

Lucy dutifully held up her face for the cousinly salute; and, in the very instant of receiving it, dropped the purse into Myles' coat pocket. This strategy was not to succeed, however, for Myles instantly felt the weight of the gold and so plucked out the purse and crowded it back into her hand.

"No, Lucy," he said with a smile, "I cannot take it. And so let it be. Now let us walk back to where I can see you go safely within doors, and then I must be on my way. I intend to sleep at Harrison's to-night."

"But that's twelve miles away," she pouted.

"Yes—twelve miles nearer home for me."

"Oh, well, then," said Lucy, suddenly seeming less downhearted, "if you've made up your mind, I suppose there's no turning you. And now I must get back to Father."

Five minutes later, Myles turned his face westward for the second time, and began his journey toward the little inn at Chesney, where he had determined to spend the night.

CHAPTER III

HEATHERINGTON ROAD

MYLES made but a short night of it at Harrison's. It was ten o'clock when he came into the yard of the little inn and bargained for supper and bed; and by five in the morning he was again astir. With the rising sun casting its shadow a hundred paces along the path before him, he passed out of the village, and while the cocks were still crowing, was traversing the slopes and windings and the long, hedge-lined vistas of Heatherington Road.

Travelers were few at this hour, and though in the farmyards the plowmen were yoking their cattle, and, beyond the second hedge, a milkmaid drove her cows afield, the dew on the wayside grass was as yet undisturbed, and the young Puritan walked for miles without meeting any with whom to exchange the greetings of the morning.

And it was a morning to lift the heart of youth—with a soft, blue sky, a glancing sun and a wind from over the moorlands that blew away all hovering cares and vain regrets like smoke wreaths from a mountain side. The air was filled with the mingled odors of

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newly springing grass and flowers and of the swelling fruit buds in the orchards. From the tops of way-side oaks or yews, the bluebirds sweetly chirped and trilled; and robin-red-breasts flashed over the path and among the apple trees bearing twigs or straws for the nesting.

The roadbed, still damp with the heavy rain that had fallen two days before, was smooth enough for youthful feet, and a grateful change from the cobblestones and broken flagging of the town. For four or five hours Myles strode onward with but few pauses for rest and no least thought of hardship in the fortune that had thus set him to travel afoot across the breadth of England with half a crown in his pocket and without a friend on the way.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when he sat down by a beech tree on the bank of a stream, to eat some of the bread and cheese which the landlady at Harrison's had insisted on his taking when she learned he meant to walk the thirty miles to Eversham before sunset. This fortunate provision was to have constituted his midday meal; but he had not counted on the appetite of a cross-country marcher. The parcel which had seemed a large and awkward one when first he received it now became most light and trifling; and when he had once started eating he hardly paused for breath till the last crumb had been devoured.

A long drink of the clear brook water was sweeter than any wine; and while he sat reckoning the dis-

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tance he had already covered, which he believed to be a good half of his day's journey, he had a sense of well-being that made it seem most excellent to be alive. But when it seemed time to go on, he found, to his great surprise, that his strongest impulse was to lie down for a nap beneath the tree rather than to bestir himself to put more miles behind him. The hill that rose before him seemed much steeper than any he had thus far encountered and the roadbed more roughly strewn with ruts and stones. His light-soled boots had never been intended for such rough travel; and for half a year he had had no occasion to walk more than a mile or two at a time. When at last he rose and took the road again, both his feet protested strongly, telling plainly enough of blisters newly formed.

The night before, after he had left his uncle's house, he had thought of searching out the residence of his legal patron and instructor, old Marcus Denby, and asking for a loan sufficient for his journey. But this idea had been almost instantly rejected. Squire Denby, as he well knew, though of most liberal habit in his better days, had now for some years had much ado to make ends meet with the proceeds of his dwindling practice, and was thus not a person from whom it was fitting to make such a request. With the exception of his comrades at the fencing school—to whom he would not have applied had he been starving—he had no other acquaintance in London. He

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had indeed given little thought to the money question, for in his anger at his uncle's loud abuse, he had been in haste to shake the dust of the town from his feet.

Now he resolved to stop at the next large town and try to find employment as a clerk or copyist until he should have accumulated enough money for his purpose. He had copied numerous documents in the office of the good Squire Denby, and had even been intrusted with the original drafting of some of the simpler legal papers. Such work he was sure he could satisfactorily perform, for he was of accurate habit and wrote a plain, round hand. But he remembered also the beggarly stipend which was commonly paid to such copyists, and the lean and poverty-stricken appearance of such as he had seen applying at solicitors' offices for this kind of work. Turning these things in his mind, he wondered grimly whether the spring, and the summer too, would not have passed before he could gather sufficient funds in this way, above the cost of his living, to defray horse hire and inn charges on his way to the West. Even if he could proceed at once and on horseback, the journey would require five or six days, for, at this season of the year, as he now remembered, there were many long stretches of the road which would be little better than quagmires.

Thus mentally rehearsing his problems, Myles went forward resolutely, and after a mile or so could partially forget the blisters and was arguing to himself that they would not grow worse as he proceeded. But

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this hope proved delusive, for half an hour had not passed before, coming to another brooklet, he was obliged to pull off his boots and socks and relieve his aching feet by bathing them in the cool stream.

Sitting on a stone by the water's edge, he began to review in earnest his hastily formed plan of walking the hundred and fifty miles to Grimsby. Already it was evident that the bread and cheese he had brought from Chesney would be woefully inadequate to sate his robust appetite even for another hour, and that he would surely halt at the next wayside inn and buy a meal the price of which would dangerously reduce his resources.

As he slowly drew on his boots, which seemed to have sadly shrunk, and resumed his painful trudging toward distant Eversham, he was considering another plan which, at first thought, seemed more promising. He had for several years before his coming to London borne an important part in the work on his farms at Grimsby; he loved to drive horses or cattle for the moving of stone or timber and was a skilled plowman and sower. On his journey to London the previous autumn he had noted with keen interest the farming operations to be seen along the way; and during many winter evenings at his uncle's house had studied a number of books of a kind then new to the world—books in which the tillage of the soil was treated as an art worthy of the best intelligence and which detailed many improvements in methods hitherto un-

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known to all save a few enthusiasts. Now Myles thought of this knowledge as a possible resource; and, in utter indifference to the fixed ideas of society as to the occupations permitted to the son of a baronet, wondered whether it would be well to apply at the first large and prosperous estate for employment as a farm overseer or foreman during the planting season. Further reflection, however (doubtless made less hopeful by the continued protests of his blistered heels), led to the conclusion that such work would in all probability be little better paid than that of the wretched copyists he had been pitying; and that the savings from such wages would be long in mounting to the sum of which he stood in need.

By this time he was limping sorely, but he still refused to think of any other destination than the one he had set that morning. He would reach Eversham by some means before dark; and during the night would come to some conclusion as to his further course. From time to time he met travelers on horseback or some slow-moving farm-cart laden with wood or hay; and when this happened he strode firmly forward, regardless of his blisters, lest some should take pity on him as unfortunate and offer assistance. Then, when the passers-by were out of sight, his gait would again become like that of one who treads bare-soled on flinty paths and therefore picks his way most carefully. So was he walking when suddenly he heard the hoofs of horses behind him, telling of other trav-

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elers; and again, and without looking around, he squared his shoulders and marched determinedly onward.

“Hola! Myles Delaroche!” came a cheerful and ringing voice, “what do you here? Is’t a wager?”

Myles wheeled about and beheld, riding toward him on a handsome cob, and leading a second horse by a long halter rein, no other than Arthur Hinsdale.

“Hola, Master Hinsdale!” he answered as steadily as his surprise would permit, “I am walking to Eversham—and beyond. Do you journey in that direction?”

Hinsdale had now come abreast of Myles, and, halting, leaned eagerly forward in his saddle toward the youth whom but the day before he had so bitterly menaced and insulted. But now a happy smile was on his face, and his black eyes sparkled with animation. Myles had never before so clearly realized how comely was the young Londoner’s countenance.

“By the Bones of Saint Peter!” exclaimed Arthur joyfully, “I do indeed. This nag I have here on halter I won on a wager three days since; and now I take him to Hinsdale where I purpose to ride him to hounds at a later season. And now, Delaroche, you are well met indeed; for if you go beyond Eversham, you can do me a right friendly turn if you will. It’s a weary task, after all, leading a somewhat mettled nag like this for that many miles; and perhaps I would have done better to bring some one who would have ridden

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him instead. Now, since you go my way, why should you not mount here and relieve me of this leading string?"

"Why, I will do so and gladly," answered Myles. "And 'twill be a greater service that you do me than any I perform for you; for truly I have come quite far enough to satisfy my will for footing it to-day; and a good horse between my knees will be most welcome."

Suiting the action to the word, he seized the pommel of the saddle on the led horse and lightly mounted. His limbs seemed to have received a new supply of energy, and he laughed aloud to think of this sudden change of circumstance. Hinsdale released his halter rein and flung it aside, and the former rivals, now on most comradely footing, went forward at an easy trot.

After they had ridden in silence for a mile or more, Arthur broke into a hunting song, and Myles who had heard the tune at a somewhat convivial party, held at his uncle's house only the week before, joined in bravely on the refrain:

A hunting we will go,
A hunting we will go,
Tantivy! Tantivy! Tantivy!
A hunting we will go.

At the moment they were passing through a stretch of wooded land where ancient oaks and beeches met over the road to form an arch of interlacing branches

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through which the sunbeams glanced most merrily. At this early season, the leaves were like tiny flowerets of yellow-green, and cast but little shade on the ground beneath. As their song came to a close, Hinsdale's arm shot out to point the course of a hare that, roused from its covert by the resounding chorus, now bounded away among the greenery.

"Zounds!" he cried, "'tis a day to make one forget Dull Care and all his dismal little Imps and Devils. And even you, Delaroche, solemn Puritan that you are, can lend a voice to a merry song in a bonny woodland glade like this. I'll warrant that, for all your dull gray coat and bookworm ways, you'd like nothing better at this moment than to ride that nag you now bestride in the wake of a lively brush, with half a hundred lusty hounds whooping alongside."

Myles laughed ringingly, and made his mount prance and curvet a bit for the pure joy of horsemanship. Arthur's gay spirits were infectious; and the whole world was brighter since his coming. But after a moment the Westerner replied, with all his usual seriousness:

"Nay, Hinsdale, I have no grudge against a merry song or a good play either—so it hath some sense and reason—and is not all of fiddle-faddle and Merry Andrew work. Puritans my people are, and so, in a sense, am I; but in a world that has so much of labor and sorrow, I see no reason for refusing such harmless joys as come our way. I am no follower of Mas-

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ter Israel Bodkin, the minister of the chapel in Fleet Street, who will have it that pleasure is the Devil's snare, and who preaches against the bear baiting in the park, not, forsooth, because 'tis pain and death to the dogs and bears, but because it gives delight to the people. And yet I like it scarcely better, I can tell you, that a clergyman of our Established Church should wager half his year's stipend at the horse racing and later, having made great winnings which must be celebrated with his companions of the day, have need to be put to bed by the men servants at the inn like any red-nosed squire. And this I saw myself last racing day."

"By Jupiter!" responded Arthur, "you yield my point indeed; and seize the chance to give me in the same breath what I doubt not is a most wholesome sermon. I very much fear, Delaroche, that you are hopelessly solemn and blink-eyed, and that I shall never be able to reform you. And 'tis a pity too, for all that's needed is to forget the grubbers and the groaners and to see the good old world as it is.

Oh, a quick-spent life and a merry one!
A lusty lad and a gallant one!
A saucy maid and a pretty one!
And a tankard of good brown ale!

"But what is this we see where the road makes into the open? If I mistake not, that is a village of some pretension a mile or two beyond; and, if so, we will

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doubtless find there a passing good inn. I hope so most ardently, for I am that empty with five hours of riding that if I feel what should be my waistband, I touch naught but my backbone. Come, let's ride, before I perish utterly."

"I must be careful," said Myles as they put their mounts to the canter, "to dine where charges are modest, for, truth to tell, I'm none too well provided for this journey."

"Ho!" answered his comrade, gayly, "give yourself no worry on that score. So long as you ride with me and save me from haltering that nag, I'll gladly pay all charges at the inns and elsewhere. Gold has no better use than to be spent; and that the dourest Puritan of you all can never deny."

Fetching a well-filled purse from his pocket, the young Cavalier tossed it aloft among the branches in seeming utter recklessness, yet so well managed the cast withal that he caught it deftly as it fell, and restored it to his waistcoat as by a single motion.

"Good friend," answered Myles, laughingly, "gold is truly meant to serve us, as you say; but if you so display it where thieves and cutthroats may see, it may not serve us long. Prithee, keep it hidden till the reckoning's presented."

"Thou'rt right again, Wise Counselor," answered Arthur with a soberer countenance. "And that reminds me of another way in which your company on this journey will be worth far more to me than any

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trifling charges I defray. If any such knaves as those you speak of should set upon us on the road or at the inns, such a sword as you wield—as none know better than I—would be of right gallant service. In truth, I think that between us we would speedily give any such curs their just deserts.”

“Let us hope so,” answered Myles gravely, “although that sort may be beforehand with pistol or blunderbuss. But does not that swinging sign we see a half mile before us betoken an inn? If so, I have myself a keen forethought of roasted beef and pudding and of your pretty purse becoming somewhat lighter ere we ride on.”

At this, Arthur spurred his horse madly forward, as though to seize some priceless treasure. The good horse that Myles was riding instantly sprang after him, so that they thundered along the smooth road like a finish at Epsom Downs. A minute later the two friends drew up, amid a scurry of ducks and hens, in the yard of the Tewksbury Arms, and flung their bridle reins to the waiting hostler.

Very shortly thereafter they were seated in a large, cool room of which the latticed windows opened on a tiny walled orchard where the buds of cherry and peach were just bursting into bloom. On a plate of polished pewter in the center of the table between them, lay a good brown loaf of wheaten bread, all fragrant from the oven, flanked on the one side by a jug of cold and creamy milk and on the other side by

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a pat of butter, fresh from the well house. Just beyond was a steaming dish of boiled turnips and greens and another and smaller one of baked potatoes. A generous portion of sliced Yorkshire pudding, with a little pitcher of clotted cream, awaited the meed of heartfelt praise which in due course it would receive. And when the worthy hostess appeared, in snowy cap and apron, bearing on a huge platter a juicy and fragrant sirloin roast, the joyous anticipations of the two youthful travelers passed all decorous bounds, and they gave vent to their emotions in whoops of applause. As Myles set himself to do justice to this noble repast, he found that all his troubles had vanished. Arthur was flourishing the huge carving knife like a juggler at the fair; and both their faces shone like those of hungry urchins at a Christmas feast.

CHAPTER IV

ROUNDHEAD AND CAVALIER

THE comrades sat for an hour at this cheerful board; and, after their first sharp hunger was abated and the beef platter pushed aside to make room for the pudding and cream, they interspersed the feast with many a merry song and story. In conclusion, the brawny-armed hostess placed before each of them a cup of steaming, black coffee and stayed to ask what wine they would drink.

The mug of home-brewed ale which had been served with the meat was quite sufficient for Myles; but when the coffee had been despatched, Arthur wished still to linger and to broach a bottle of Burgundy, if the inn afforded such, in honor of this their first meal together. But Myles' attention had been caught by the sound of a raucous voice that was uplifted in the yard outside. To this interruption he the more readily gave heed because it gave opportunity for disregarding Arthur's suggestion. The young Puritan was, both by temper and by conviction, averse to all excess in matters of food and drink; and remembering Arthur's flushed face and exaggerated manner on one or two afternoons at Monsieur la Salle's, it

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seemed to him the part of friendship to exert upon his companion such restraint as he might in this respect. So he resolved to draw him away from the table, if possible, by diverting his lively mind to other interests.

“Hark!” he said suddenly, raising his head to listen to the speaker in the innyard, “Is’t one who stands for Parliament in a by-election, think you?”

Arthur paused and listened also. Then they clearly heard the words—uttered in a keen and nasal voice that was half a shout and half a groan: “Woe! Woe unto them that seek and follow after the idols of Babylon. Woe unto the winebibbers, the gamesters, the surplice wearers and all those who trample on the faithful, thinking to deny them forever the places of honor and the goodly things of the earth. Verily they shall——”

Here the voice of the speaker was drowned by a rising chorus of approving voices, shouts of *Amen* and other cries and groans that might be either of applause or of derision. Arthur laughed uproariously.

“Nay, ’tis no election,” he cried. “Though such as he would be a worthy comember with Gracious-Zeal Tompkins and Tribulation Wholesome in our wise and noble Parliament. ’Tis some worthy tailor or chimney sweep who, being much moved by the spirit, is now pointing to such backsliders and halfway saints as you, Myles Delaroche, the straight and narrow way. Come, let us hear his message.”

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Seizing his hat he started forthwith for the yard. Meeting the worthy landlady in the common room, he paused to pay the reckoning; and Myles, taking advantage of this delay, hurried out to the stables and called to the hostler to bring forth their mounts.

In a moment the two friends were standing on the outskirts of a small crowd of farmers, artisans and serving people who surrounded an impassioned orator who now declaimed with alternate groans and shouts from the horse block near the road. They learned from one of the inn servants that this was no other than Hezekiah Busby, the Gifted Tinker, who traveled on foot about the country, mending the pots and pans of the inns and alehouses and addressing such gatherings as this. Myles had heard of him as a hedge preacher whose power over the country folk was such as more than once had made him a leader of mobs in scenes of fanatic violence. He claimed the power of healing the sick by the laying on of hands, and, in particular, of exorcising witches and recovering their victims from malignant spells. All the emphasis in his preaching lay in his frightful denunciations of "the worshipers of Baal," among whom he included all the Established Clergy and apparently every one in the Kingdom who had either wealth or position.

His wiry hair was cropped close to his skull; and this served to bring into prominence his huge, red ears, which stood out from his head like the wings of a bat. His discourse was interspersed with gestures

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so wild and violent that they amounted to contortions, and by grimaces that sometimes gave to his long and bony face the look of a fool and sometimes that of a madman. On three or four small boys at one side of the gathering, these postures and grimaces exercised a fearful fascination; they were comical and frightful both; and the wide-eyed lads could hardly decide whether to remain and laugh, as at the juggler who performed on the green, or to run for safety as from a dancing bear that had broken from his keeper.

Some of the older auditors seemed likewise divided between the impulse to laugh at the extravagances of the orator and to cower before his fearful prophecies. But the greater portion of the crowd were plainly in sympathy with his beliefs and aims, and did not hesitate to encourage him by yells and groans and cries of "*Amen, Brother, Amen!*", "*Smite the Egyptians,*" "*Amen, Verily!*" and by giving the closest attention to his harangue.

Myles Delaroche had little taste for this form of preaching, although it was much in favor with some of the most zealous among the Puritans. Such antics as these seemed to him fitter for apes than for men; he was disgusted with these howling fanatics who brought ridicule on all efforts at reform; and he only waited an opportunity to get his companion away from the crowd and on the high road again. It was clear, however, that Hinsdale had no intention of leaving so hurriedly a scene which promised good sport. He

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crowded forward close to the horse block, and, with a merry twinkle in his eye, yet seemed to mark every word and gesture of the speaker. It was not long before his plumed hat and waving ringlets caught the rolling gaze of the sectary, and these symbols of luxury and vanity at once drew the full fire of his denunciation.

“And THOU, Son of Baal!” he shouted, thrusting his hand violently toward Arthur and pointing a long and somewhat grimy finger at his head, like a pistol, “wilt *thou* persist in thy idolatry? Or wilt thou take warning and turn from thy wickedness ere the pillar of fire descends upon thee as upon Sodom and Gomorrah?”

The pointing finger had turned every face in the crowd toward the young Cavalier; and some caught their breaths at this bold challenging of one so evidently of birth and position. But the dramatic force of the invective was wholly lost by reason of the unexpected and ridiculous behavior of him against whom it had been directed. The instant the pointed finger singled him out, Arthur crouched to his knees in pretended fright, and threw up his elbow before him as if to ward a missile from his head. As Busby went on speaking, the youth apparently regained his courage, and straightened up by degrees, peeking over his arm at the preacher with the face of an urchin who from behind a wall has flung a snowball at a passer-by. The serving maids and two or three loung-

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ers began to titter, and the village lads, now sure that the occasion was a jovial one, raced around the gathering to Arthur's side to gaze in delighted expectancy at his face. Some of the more serious listeners turned sour looks in the direction of the disturber; and Myles, knowing well the temper of the Puritan sectaries, ventured a half-whispered warning to his friend not to go too far in his foolery. This, however, was uttered from smiling lips, for Arthur's mimicry was irresistibly comical.

The Gifted Tinker proceeded with his discourse in apparent disregard of the byplay which was taking so large a share of the attention of his auditors; and his condemnations and dire prophecies were for some minutes directed as a general broadside against the "Hordes of Mammon." But the presence of this individual and flagrant example of Vanity was too great a temptation for the fervid orator to resist. Again the bony finger shot out in Arthur's direction; and the speaker bellowed:

"Thou slave of Pleasure and the Evil One! What shall it avail thee that thou'rt dressed like a popinjay in all the rainbow's colors? What thy curls and jewels and ribbons? What——"

But here shouts of laughter and of rage drowned out his voice. The gathering was in a tumult. At this second withering blast, Arthur had run and hidden behind Myles, like one who seeks to avoid the jaws of a ferocious dog by taking shelter behind the legs

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of another whom he hopes will receive the attack instead. From that position he was peering out, first on one side then on the other, with such mock terror on his countenance that all the lighter-minded members of the audience yelled and screamed with laughter. Myles himself was convulsed, but for all that, did not forget the danger of clubs and stones in the hands of such fanatics as made up a good half of the gathering. Whirling swiftly about, he got behind his rollicking companion, and seizing both his elbows, propelled him willy nilly and at a smart run across the inn yard to the side of his horse which the groom was still holding. Arthur also was yelling with laughter; but when they reached the horses, he tried to break away from his captor as if to return to the crowd that still surrounded the exhorter. At this Myles shifting his hold, and catching his friend by the back and knees, fairly flung him upward into the saddle. An instant later he had mounted also, and was spurring toward the road, crowding from his path two or three of the preacher's adherents who seemed half disposed to bar his progress. Arthur rode willingly enough at his side, but turned in the roadway to wave mock farewells to the preacher and to doff his plumed hat to the women.

Pandemonium now reigned in the innyard, for although the sectaries had suffered the horsemen to pass unmolested, they turned with fury on those who by their laughter had encouraged this reckless disturber

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of their gathering; and these answered them with hoots and yells of derision and insult. As the two youths reached the summit of a hill, a furlong from the inn, they turned for a last look at the scene they had left. A general fight was in progress between the two parties, with sticks and stones hurtling madly through the air and the Gifted Tinker in the midst of the fray. Some of the tavern windows were broken; and presently the landlady issued from the door, and proved, in defense of her property, a very Amazon. Summoning her hostlers and other serving-men and aided by a few of the soberer bystanders with pickets hastily plucked from the garden fence, she charged between the two parties, and in a moment had scattered them in rout, and remained in triumphant possession of the field.

CHAPTER V

A WOODLAND FESTIVAL

WHEN the companions had seen the Gifted Tinker and his disciples chased away from the tavern premises, they turned their horses' heads again toward Eversham, and went down the hill at a smart canter. Arthur was laughing and singing by turns, and Myles had caught the contagion of his frolicsome mood and was smiling broadly at the figure poor Busby had made while vainly endeavoring to hold his hearers' attention. The entire scene in the innyard, which, under other circumstances, would have given rise to reflections none too cheerful as to the rising tide of fanaticism in the country, now appeared as mere buffoonery and clowning. Not for years had he found himself so much in the mood of a schoolboy on a stolen holiday.

The pack which had been strapped on his back was now snugly stowed in the saddlebags; his gray woolen cloak had been well brushed at the inn and the stains of travel removed from his boots, so that his appearance did not present too strong a contrast with that of his fashionably clad companion. The horses were

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still fresh; and it was evident that they would journey far beyond Eversham before nightfall. This was the more likely since Arthur showed himself not at all averse to a gallop whenever the road ran smooth and level before him, saying in excuse that it would be serviceable to know which of his nags had the better wind and speed.

So riding, they passed before three o'clock the village at which Myles had planned to spend the night, and emerged into region of moor and forest land. The air they breathed came now as a fresh and lively breeze from distant hills, across the open, furze-grown spaces, and now as leaf-and-blossom-scented zephyrs from near-by ferny glades. Much of the land was unclosed and deeply wooded. For long distances the road was shadowed by the interlacing branches of huge old trees, which, as saplings, might have seen the glorious array of Richard's armored knights and squires or the green-clad bowmen who followed Robin Hood.

Such beautiful and storied woods were interspersed with pastured hills, now freshly green, and with new-plowed fields of deep and fragrant loam. All the details of their tillage that could be seen from the road were eagerly observed by one of the travelers. Here and there a lusty sower, with slow-advancing tread and wide, alternate sweep of arms to left and right, was scattering the grain from a sack suspended at his waist; a group of hedgers and ditchers trimmed and

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delved at the boundaries; and yokes of patient cattle hauled great loads of wood or stone or smoothed the new-sown ground by dragging over it a giant brush of untrimmed trees.

For a quarter of an hour they had been riding at a foot pace past a wooded tract, inclosed by a high stone wall, which Hinsdale said was a portion of Heatherington Park, the private demesne of Sir Hilary Buell of Heatherington. Presently they heard the sound of music and of many gay voices, and, coming to the lodge gates, halted to gaze at a scene of gayety within. In the open wood beyond, a hundred or more richly dressed ladies and gentlemen disported themselves in games and dances, children played at hide and seek, and liveried servants hurried to and fro, bearing refreshment for the assembled guests, or benches and cushions for their comfort.

“By my soul!” cried Arthur, “’tis the Spring Fete of Heatherington. We are in famous luck to have chanced upon it, for here will be sport indeed.”

“Aye,” answered Myles, “but to this festival we have no invitation; and if we rode in upon it, ’tis like our welcome would be scant.”

“Never fear for that,” laughed the other. “I know Sir Hilary and Lady Buell full well; and they have pressed me to make stop at Heatherington whenever I chanced to be near. Come, I’ll introduce you, and you shall see how they will welcome any friend of mine.”

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Myles would have objected further, but by this time Arthur was riding through the gates, and there was naught to do but follow. Within the grove they tied their horses to saplings, and soon stood before Sir Hilary and his wife who were receiving a group of late arrivals. As Arthur had predicted, they gave to him and his comrade most cordial welcome, and urged them to partake of cakes and wine from a bounteously spread table that was near at hand and later to view all the games and spectacles of the festival.

Together the travelers made the rounds of the grove and watched by turns the dancers who bowed and curtsied to the sound of viols, harps and flutes, the bowlers at ninepins on a strip of hard-packed earth which served for a green, and a pair of lusty youths at swordplay with long French foils and full accoutrement of masks and guards. These last were surrounded by an eager throng of merrymakers, who broke into loud applause at every hit by either contestant; and Myles and Arthur stood for long on a hillock near by, closely noting every well-made pass and parry.

At last the comrades joined a larger crowd that was gathered in a semicircle before a rustic stage erected in a little dell which formed a natural amphitheater. The performance was already in progress; and so beautiful was the woodland setting and so brightly clad and vivacious the actors, that Myles most

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eagerly sought a place which would allow him perfect seeing and hearing.

The play was "A Midsummer Night's Dream." One of Sir Hilary's daughters had the part of Hermia and another that of Helena, while a little black-eyed maid of fourteen, who strongly reminded Myles of Lucy Dalrymple, was Titania, queen of the fairies.

Myles had several times attended the theater in London with his uncle and cousin, and in some of the performances had found a keen delight. But never before had he seen women on the stage; for, in all the plays that he had witnessed the female parts were taken by men or boys. And now he realized with a shock of surprise how much the art of the theater had been losing by this narrowing of its resources. For here were beautiful women of gentle birth and breeding, with voices sweetly attuned by Nature, who had little need for artifice and counterfeiting to enact the rôles of other noble maidens of a bygone time, and who therefore sustained and heightened the play's illusion as no masculine actors of such parts could ever hope to do. Myles gazed enchanted,—feeling that now for the first time he beheld the vision of the dramatist. All, and more than all, that the performance lacked in professional skill was compensated for by the personal adaptation of the performers to their parts.

Standing by a beech trunk and gazing with all his eyes at the entrancing scene, the young Puritan lost

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all sense of time and place, and for an hour and more lived only in the dream world of the poet's fantasy. At a shifting of the scenes, he looked about and for the first time missed his companion. But it seemed most probable that Arthur was conversing in some of the animated groups on the other side of the gathering; and Myles, with his thoughts on the play, gave little heed to his absence. A half hour later, however, when the green silk hangings which served for curtains were drawn across the stage in token of finale, Myles looked somewhat anxiously among the scattering audience, for his Cavalier friend was nowhere to be seen. Straightway he began a search among the chatting and laughing groups into which the festival had resolved itself. Moving rapidly and closely scanning each successive party that he met, he had nearly made a circuit of the grove before he was successful.

Arthur was sitting with two other richly dressed young gentlemen at a little table, somewhat withdrawn from the most frequented space and rather heavily shaded by the closely interwoven branches overhead. It was already somewhat dark in the ancient grove; and Myles might have passed without recognizing his friend had not Arthur's voice been raised just then in high and reckless tones:

"Aha, Thornley, my buck! The luck's yours again. But here's nuther goo' yellow boy will square our 'counts."

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Pulling a guinea from his purse, Hinsdale flung it on the table with such a loose and careless hand that the coin slid from the edge and fell among the leaves. It was quickly recovered by the man who had been addressed as Thornley, and who neither asked nor received any apology for this careless handling. He was a heavy-shouldered fellow with a thick red neck and cheeks and small and piglike eyes, and with his cheek and lip distorted by a scarce-healed scar. His doublet and hose, although of rich material, were grossly stained with wine. His companion was the picture of a spendthrift younger son, for long abandoned to folly and vice, and now grown reckless of honor.

Arthur was holding unsteadily a tiny silver cup in his left hand; and he now swept up from the board a pair of dice and dropped them within it. As Myles approached, he could clearly see by Arthur's flushed face and abrupt and graceless movements that he was much the worse for wine; and the young Puritan had sufficient knowledge of the ways of the fashionable world to enable him to understand the situation at a glance. Neither of the other players was more than slightly intoxicated; and it was evident that they seized the opportunity to fill their pockets with but the smallest risk of suffering loss themselves.

Myles strode forward to a place near the table, and, bowing somewhat abruptly to the strangers, addressed his comrade:

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"Come, Hinsdale," he urged, "'tis high time we were on the road again."

"O don' trouble bou' that," responded Arthur, thickly. "Got finish game—these genelman."

"No," answered Myles determinedly, advancing and laying his hand on Arthur's shoulder. "You're not in condition for any game. You're—you're too tired. Come, let's go on to the inn."

Arthur turned pettishly away, and flung another gold piece on the board.

"There's somethin' play for," he said. "See me shake the winners now."

Throwing down the dice, he peered drunkenly at them, then, shaking his head, passed the cup to Thornley. Thornley shook in his turn, then the third player. As soon as the dice were on the board from this cast, Thornley swept up the gold piece. Pocketing this with one hand, he seized the dice with the other and dropped them into the cup.

"Come, Arthur," said Myles, still more shortly, "let us go now."

Thornley rose from his chair and gazed rudely into the face of the young countryman.

"And who may you be, young sir?" he sneered. "Guardian or schoolmaster to our friend, perhaps?"

"Hol' on, Thornley. He's fren' o' mine," protested Arthur, thickly. "He'll siddown—watch us play."

"Guardian enough to save him from such folly as this," said Myles to Thornley in a low, firm tone.

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"You know well he's in no condition to match with you."

"Zounds!" cried Thornley, placing his right hand on his sword-hilt, "do you call me a cheat then?"

His companion had also risen, and now imitated Thornley's threatening gesture.

"I bandy no names," answered Myles, somewhat more loudly, "but this game shall cease ere my friend is stripped of his last guinea."

"By all the Imps of Tophet!" roared Thornley. "So I'm a cheat, am I. Damme, but you shall pay well for that."

Snatching his sword from its sheath, and grinding his teeth ferociously, he advanced upon Myles who thus far stood with his weapon in its scabbard and with his hands at his sides. But the young Westerner was far from helpless. With an upward stroke of his left arm he thrust aside the threatening blade, and, at the same instant, delivered a lightninglike blow with his brawny right fist. This collided with his adversary's chin with sledge-hammer force, and Thornley was fairly lifted from the ground. He fell backward with a crash, and lay still. Meanwhile Myles had whirled on his toes and struck the other gamester squarely between the eyes. He too fell in a heap; and when Sir Hilary Buell reached the scene with two or three of the guests who meant to come between the combatants and save bloodshed, Myles was standing, with his weapon still in its scabbard, and waiting for

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either of his victims to rise and renew the fray. Arthur, partly sobered by the sight of this perilous encounter, had risen and stood unsteadily at the side of his friend.

"By my faith! young sir," panted Sir Hilary, "you have a fist like the hammer of Thor, and apparently have little need for weapons."

Myles bowed gravely and replied:

"I would gladly avoid using them, sir, in any such brawl as this. I have no wish for bloodshed, but only to prevent undue advantage being taken."

By this time the group was closely surrounded by nearly all the other men in the grove who crowded about to second any effort of their host. Sir Hilary spoke again, and loudly, so that all might hear:

"You are right, Master Delaroche. I saw and heard a little of this quarrel from a distance; and I blame you not at all. Still get you away at once, I pray you, and take Hinsdale with you. I see that these brave throwers of dice do stir a little already, showing that your fist is not altogether mortal. When they recover their senses fully, *they* at least will thirst for blood; and such work we cannot have here. We will look to them. Pray get you away and quickly."

With another bow to Sir Hilary, Myles took Arthur's arm and led him rapidly toward the horses. In a moment they were in saddle and riding through the lodge gates. Arthur offered no word of remonstrance,

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and seemed indeed to submit to Myles' leadership as to that of one having unquestioned authority. Half an hour later they rode into the innyard at Bartley, a little market village, five or six miles from Heatherington.

CHAPTER VI

THE CROSSWAYS

WHEN the two youths took the road on the morning after the Heatherington Fete Arthur was unwontedly silent and depressed. He had complained of an aching head, and had barely tasted his breakfast eggs and bacon ; but the sunlight and the brisk April breeze soon restored his spirits, and by midday he was laughing and singing again. Whenever the road lay level and smooth before them for a quarter of a mile, he would set spurs to his horse's sides and shout a challenge to his more soberly riding companion to overtake him. So alternating between a walking pace and a gallop, they rapidly put the miles behind them, and by mid afternoon had reached the town a dozen leagues from Bartley where they had planned to spend the night.

For nearly a week they traversed muddy roads and narrow bridlepaths, through regions of fertile fields, open and wind-swept moors and dark and ancient woodlands. They supped and slept at wayside inns both good and bad, and dealt with men of many sorts, but met with no further adventures. At last, at eleven o'clock on a cloudy morning, they came to a cross-

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road where the right hand turning led toward Grimsby, some thirty miles to the northwest, while to the southwest lay Shrewsbury with Hinsdale Hall some miles beyond.

Where the track divided, Myles leaped down from his saddle and extended his hand to his comrade in token of farewell.

"You have greatly aided me, Arthur," he said gravely. "Without that good horse of yours, my journey would have been a long one."

"Well, and even so," replied Arthur, while he gripped the proffered hand, "why need you stand on the ground to say so? If my horse has somewhat lightened your way, I am glad indeed. But any service of the sort has already been overpaid. I do not forget that 'tis owing to you that I myself came safely through. In another ten minutes that pair of scavengers at Heatherington would have plucked me as bare as carrion crows pluck the carcass of a sheep."

Myles smiled grimly at the remembrance of the scene at the wood fete; but turned at once toward the horse he had ridden and began opening the saddle bags to remove his belongings.

"'Tis nearly noonday," he said "and I have thirty miles yet to travel. I must say good-by and be on my way."

"And think you, Myles Delaroche," cried Hinsdale, "that I will let you travel that way afoot? What have I horses for?"

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Myles turned about and faced his comrade. His face was grave, but there was a twinkle, nevertheless, in his eyes as he replied:

“Why I suspect ’tis not altogether for your own good and pleasure. I’ve been thinking somewhat in the last day or two, while we made such slow progress along these muddy ways; and now I have a question to ask of you ere we part. How did it happen, pray tell me, that this horse you were leading to Hinsdale was ready furnished with saddle and bridle?”

“Oh!” answered Arthur, his black eyes fairly dancing, “is it not plain that I might have use for those also at Hinsdale?”

“Aye, but if so, they would more likely have been sent by the carter. Now, on your word, Arthur, is it not the truth that you had in mind that some one might ride with you?”

Arthur threw back his head and laughed loud and long, while Myles, with a broad smile on his face, awaited his reply. At last young Hinsdale wiped away with the back of his hand the tears that had sprung to his eyes with the violence of his laughing, and between gasps for breath and further chuckles of merriment, made answer.

“Well, then—if you *will* have the story, this is the way it came about. ’Tis true enough I planned to take that nag to Hinsdale; but at that it might have been a month ere I started had it not been for you—dour Puritan and spoilsport that you are. First there

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was your beating me so soundly at the fencing, and my flying into a rage like a schoolboy who has lost his marbles, and making such a foolish figure before all the lads in the place with talk of running you through the body for doing that which I should have seen as a service. Then it seems your good Uncle Dalrymple had gained for you an opening for which I or any of us at La Salle's would have given ten years of our lives; and you refused it—just because it squared not perfectly with your principles.”

“How knew you that?” demanded Myles.

“A little bird told me—a right pretty little bird it was, as no doubt you'll agree. And I am as loyal to the King as any man; but I know that those are not all fools or knaves who now oppose him; and I can honor a man who *acts* as a man when it means some sacrifice.”

Myles' face reddened, and for a moment he looked at the ground at his feet. Then, suddenly raising his head, he asked:

“Was it Lucy Dalrymple who told you?”

“Aye, Lucy—as pretty a lass as there is in England to-day. I could wish that she would care but half as much for my safety and comfort as 'tis evident she does for yours.”

“How came it that she told you of this?”

“Why, you ungrateful dog! Why should she tell me but for your sake? You should be blessing her name for the thought. When you left her that night

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in Surrey Lane, she only entered the house to find a housekeeper to attend her. In two minutes she was out of doors again and on her way to our place, which, as you know, it but three or four squares distant."

"And did she bid you ride after me?"

"Aye, that she did; but in that her plan was better formed than one would think. It seems she'd learned somehow from you that you would lie at Harrison's that night; and her orders were that I 'should take two horses in the morning and ride and overtake you. Such a little princess royal is she! I was to do as she bade me without question or she would never speak to me again."

"So, rather than face such wrath, you obeyed."

"Aye, for that and for some other reasons. But zounds! you must have been early astir, or else you walk with the seven-leagued boots. I was away by eight o'clock; and passed Harrison's, where they told me the road you had taken, by nine. Over and again I thought you must have turned aside somewhere, for I had the nags at a brisk trot all the way; and you'll remember 'twas nearly noon when I came upon you. You had marched fifteen miles that morning and near as much the night before. And blisters! Oh, my soul! I knew it when I first clapped eyes on you from a quarter of a mile behind. You walked as though you trod on eggs. I had a laugh at that that paid me for all my early rising, and the haltering of that skittish beast for all those miles. I was near

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bursting out again when I came up behind you, and you of a sudden straightened up and marched like a musketeer in rank and line. Faith! 'twas as good as a hunt and worth a dozen early risings."

Arthur began laughing again, and now Myles joined him. That he was himself the butt of the joke made little difference now that the blisters were healed and the journey practically accomplished. But presently he answered in mock-serious tone:

"Well, now that I know how grossly you have deceived me in this, is it fitting, think you, that I any longer ride a horse of yours?"

Arthur affected deeply to consider this question. With scowling brow, he gazed first at the ground then at the sky overhead while half a minute passed. Then he replied, slowly and solemnly:

"I cannot to-day reach a decision on so difficult a question. But, as you ride toward Grimsby, you may give to it your deepest and wisest thought. When you have arrived, you may indite to me an epistle, setting forth your mature conclusions, and in due course send it to me by some groom or plowboy who will ride the nag back to Hinsdale. If I find your communication unsatisfactory, I will so advise you."

Myles laughed again, and swung himself into the saddle.

"I will obey your instructions to the letter," he said gravely. "And now good-by, and all good fortune go with you."

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From the next hillock, a furlong down the road, he looked back toward the crossways, and waved another farewell to his friend whose fluttering white handkerchief was just visible where his horse bore him at an easy canter along the Shrewsbury road.

CHAPTER VII

GRIMSBY MANOR

JUST as the sun was setting, Myles approached the ancient manor house which for some centuries had been the home of his family. This was a substantial low-eaved structure of stone with a roof of tiling now fallen into disrepair and showing the marks of makeshift patching. Between the house and the road, what had once been a smoothly graveled way whereon four horses could have been ridden abreast had been so worn by winter storms and encroached upon by grass and shrubs that any party of riders must have traversed it in single file and have looked well to the footing of their mounts among the bare foundation stones.

The barns and wagon sheds that loomed in the rear were yet more neglected, and the roofs of some showed gaping holes. Beyond these the tillage and mowing fields were bordered with widening fringes of briars and saplings, and one or two were covered with the dried and dismal stalks of last year's uncut weeds. Four or five cows at early pasturage showed by their plump sides that their winter feeding had been ample; but this scanty herd, as Myles well knew,

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was not a tenth of what the manor farm had supported in olden time; and the two old plow horses and the rough-coated pony that came to the gate as he passed were but a sorry remnant of the Grimsby stables.

Never before had the decay of the family fortunes so vividly impressed him. When he had ridden away in the fall the old house had seemed a comfortable and roomy homestead; its barns with their great, half empty mows were abodes of quietness and herby fragrance—most snug retreats with a book of chronicles or romance on a rainy day—and the fallow fields had appeared as gardens of vari-colored bloom. It was thus that he had remembered Grimsby when among the crowded streets and muddy lanes of London. But now he saw it as by the cold gray light of reality. He had journeyed twice across the breadth of England, and had in his mind the material for comparison. Grimsby was slowly falling to ruin. For a moment he was shamefacedly glad that Arthur Hinsdale had not chosen to accompany him on this last phase of his ride, for if he had done so, he must have returned with the thought that the house of Delaroche was not far removed from beggary. Then, with an impatient shrug of his shoulders, Myles rejected all such weak and useless reflections, and turned his thoughts to the practical problem before him. Ways must surely be found to restore the manor farm to its olden state. With his mind thus occupied, he reined his borrowed mount up the stony pathway.

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Three years before, Myles' elder brother, John, who in due course would inherit the title and the estate, had betaken himself to America, there to occupy some vast and vague domain of forest land of which he had the grant from the Plymouth Company and by means of which he hoped to retrieve the family fortunes. Sir Anton Delaroche, with his wife and younger son, had remained at Grimsby, administering the remnant of the ancestral holdings. These had been reduced by a series of improvident or unfortunate owners from a domain which a century before had comprised some thousands of acres to one that now contained hardly as many hundreds. Only two tenant farmers now paid rent at Grimsby Manor; and the manor farm itself, depleted as it was, had become its owner's main resource. Four fifths of its area was forest and fen land, of little use for pasturage, but which for a score of years had furnished a meager income from the timber cutting. This resource also was now nearly exhausted, for most of the merchantable trees had been cut and sold, and three or four hundred acres were in sprouts and saplings, most of which would not for a generation be fit for anything more than firewood.

Sir Anton had been severely wounded in the wars in Flanders, where he had fought in his younger days, and for many years had been more than half disabled. Sometimes, in clear, warm weather, he would ride his ancient pony to oversee some work on the farm or

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timber lot, or to meet some old friends with whom he discussed the state of the kingdom in the parlor of the Whitney Arms at Belford Village. But more often he was to be found sitting before the huge old fireplace in the hall at the manor, with a volume of history or poetry or of the sermons of some great divine. So occupied, he could forget for hours together the pangs of rheumatism in his half-crippled limbs and the long decline of his worldly fortunes.

Mistress Delaroche, his stately, white-haired wife, was of another temper. She still preserved much of the queenly bearing that had distinguished her in the society of Shrewsbury town a quarter of a century before, when James the First was on the throne. With the aid of one old serving woman, she kept the house immaculate and set forth a bounteous table. To this, with its worn but glistening silver and its snowy nappery, they need not hesitate to welcome any old friend on whom Dame Fortune had more warmly smiled or any chance visitor from Shrewsbury or Belford. In twenty-five years at the lonely manor house she had not lost touch with the world nor interest in its varied doings. The news-letters which arrived two or three times a season from the capital had no more eager reader. She knew not only of the sermons preached in London town, but of the plays and masques that held the boards; and it was to her that the neighbors came—especially those who like herself had sons overseas—for the latest word from the American Colonies.

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During all his stay in London, Myles had written to his mother by every fortnightly post ; and, knowing well her interests, he had recounted far more than the incidents of his daily life or those of his uncle's household. By this means both his parents were better informed of the great events of the day and their significance in the struggle between King and Commons than the inmates of many a lordly household that had its seat at a distance from the capital.

At the stable door the returning traveler was warmly greeted by old Laurence, the last of the male retainers of the House of Delaroche. Thence hurrying to the house, he surprised his mother and father who were just sitting down to their evening meal. When Myles had been released from his mother's eager embrace, and was seated at the table opposite the great chair of Sir Anton, he proceeded at once and straightforwardly to answer their anxious inquiries. While the roast cooled on the board, he related the whole story of his uncle's efforts in his behalf, of his rejection of the King's commission and the bitter quarrel which ensued.

Neither of his parents interrupted the tale with any comments or questions, and when it was finished the old clock on the wall ticked loudly for an interval. Then his father said, slowly :

“By this refusal, Myles, you have ruined your prospects of advancement; and you must now content yourself with what is possible with our narrow means

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at Grimsby. Yet I would not have had you act otherwise. The King's encroachments on our rights under the law grow worse and worse as years go by. 'Twas three months ago John Berwick of Belford was thrown into prison for no other offense than that of being the leader of the Commons party there, and with no warrant save that of the Star Chamber. All writs are refused; and he to-day lies in durance at the pleasure of the King and his ministers. 'Tis the same all over England; and if such things are permitted to go on unchecked, 'twill soon be the same as if the Great Charter had never been sealed at Runnymede."

"From what I hear 'tis worse in London than in the West Country," cried Mistress Delaroche.

"Aye," answered her husband with a resounding blow on the table, "what with illegal monopolies, trade fees and ship money for the fattening of his purse, with the hounding and harrying of ministers of the gospel and with Star Chamber Court and High Commission for the jailing and hanging of those who oppose him, King Charles is storing up for himself a day of wrath. And I for one pray God that it may soon come. He has summoned the Parliament at last; but if the members do not his will in all things, he will quickly send them packing. And then I think we shall see pikes and muskets and hear the voice of cannon. If these old limbs of mine would anywise permit, I'd march myself in such a cause."

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"It may be," said Myles, "that when the King sees the temper of the Parliament, he'll bethink himself ere 'tis too late. I hear that those who uphold the right of Englishmen outnumber the King's supporters in the Commons by more than two to one."

"Nay!" cried his father, "he'll send them packing and essay again to govern without them. And if he should bethink himself, as you say, 'twould be only how he might make false promises to gain his ends. He is a Stuart; and all that race is false, from her whom they called Bonnie Mary, Queen of Scots, that murdered one husband and maybe two to gain her own ends, down to him who now wears the Crown of England. If the Commons ever grants him subsidies without attaching conditions as to reform of these abuses ere any moneys reach his treasury, we may be sure that they will receive naught but lies in return, and will have made it possible for him to build up an army with which to crush them. I pray God they may be better guided."

"They will be, I'm thinking," replied Myles. "I have it from Squire Denby, who is in the counsels of the Puritan leaders, that the Commons will demand reform before they will grant any moneys whatsoever."

"Aye, maybe so, maybe so," returned the elder, "but so long as Strafford rules the civil polity and Laud that of the Church, there'll be no liberty for Englishmen."

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"But think you it must come to war?" asked Mistress Delaroche, glancing anxiously from the stern-set face of her husband to the no less serious countenance of her son. "Three-fourths of England has suffered from these lawless practices. Will not the King find himself overborne at once?"

"Aye, there will be war," answered Sir Anton, nodding his head emphatically. "And 'twill be no easy victory either. When at last we take to pike and bombard, the King will raise his standard and call his loyal vassals round him. And in that hour not only kingship, but dukedoms, lordships and knighthoods will hang in the balance; for there's a new spirit abroad in the land, and many do plan earnestly to do away with all at once, and make the common citizen ruler through his vote, as 'twas among the early Romans. The very rumor of this will drive into the King's party many a knight and lord who has for years opposed his usurpations. And with these will go full many stout fighting men. Essex will be true to the Parliament, I think, and half a dozen or more; but when all is said we shall have the King and his nobles and his prelates on one side and the Commons on the other. Whichever prevails will have no easy victory."

"I think 'tis so," said Myles after a pause, "but let us hope the storm will not break for some time yet. I have been thinking much of our own affairs also, and of somewhat we may do to improve the farm here, so that its yield may be more ample for our

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needs. These things I shall wish to consider with you fully."

"Aye," cried his mother, "and a good thought too, for surely there is dire need of such mending. But now let us carve the roast before 'tis utterly cold. You, Myles, must be famished with all your riding and with no better fare than that of the inns. Come Anton, ply your knife, I pray, while I boil a pot of that wondrous good coffee which Myles sent to us from London town."

Soon the plates were heaped with bounteous portions of beef and vegetables, and the aroma of fresh-made coffee filled the room. Myles ate and drank with a right good will, and both the elders made a better meal than at any time for months. For hours after the cloth was removed the family sat about the board, deep in the discussion of crops and fields and markets. Some references there were to the distracted state of the kingdom, but for the most part they talked of the barley on the West Close, the price of wool and mutton and the pasturage that might be had from Mallard Fen.

It was midnight before Myles went to his bed; and thereafter his sleep was much disturbed with dreams of following through the Rue Meadow a fantastic and most unmanageable plow, the share of which was formed by two crossed sword blades.

CHAPTER VIII

WAR CLOUDS

ON the day following his return to Grimsby Myles entered upon the most laborious season of his life. At daybreak he was in the stables looking to the feeding of the stock, and half an hour later was following the plow in the Rue Meadow. All through the hours of light with but brief pauses for meals and for the necessary resting of his team, he drove the work forward; and by sunset could look upon nearly two acres of freshly upturned sod. Old Laurence held the reins in the rougher and stonier places, and at other times rested beneath the apple trees or busied himself with a bit of ditching at the lower end of the field.

In three days the plot was plowed and dragged, the loose stones gathered up and the grain bushed in. The work was repeated in four or five other closes; and by the end of May the whole of the arable land of the manor farm, save that of the hay fields and the orchard and garden, had been freshly sown. Myles had even planted an acre or two with the Indian corn of which they had received a sack the year before from his brother John, in far-off Massachusetts.

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As soon as the planting was done they commenced the repairing of the roofs of house and barns ; and this work was barely completed when the hay harvest was upon them. Myles found the long summer days too short by half for the tasks that everywhere confronted him ; and he had often to reproach himself for working his horses and faithful old Laurence beyond what was fitting for their strength.

Old Laurence was scandalized, nevertheless, by certain methods which his young master adopted, and which had as their object the saving of time and human labor. Myles would never be content to do with hand tools and in the traditional way anything which, by any contrivance, could be accomplished by the labor of the horses. He rigged a lever tackle by means of which he pulled out stumps with the team which Laurence would have delved around for days. When a great stone on the drag proved too heavy for the horses to draw up a slope he brought some small fence posts from a pile near by, and using these for rollers, soon had the load at the top of the rise. He even projected making half a dozen little plows, but four or five inches wide and deep, and mounting them all on a single frame for the field and garden cultivating. This last plan, however, which was plainly regarded as insane by his old helper, was found too difficult for immediate accomplishment, and so was postponed to a less hurried season.

Meanwhile the war clouds had month by month

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grown blacker and more menacing. The Parliament summoned in the spring had met the fate prophesied by the old Puritan baronet. Discord between the assembly and the King had become manifest at once; the Commons met the requests for money with demands for the redressing of the people's grievances; and after a few weeks the sovereign dismissed them in a rage.

At the first of November the weather was still mild and dry, and Myles turned energetically to the execution of a plan which had been in his mind since the spring. Their growing herds of cattle and sheep would in another season require more hay and pasturage than the farm could now afford; and a way must be found to make up the deficiency. More and more he had come to believe that the solution of this and many of their other difficulties lay in the draining of Mallard Fen. Here was a tract of a hundred acres of deep, rich soil that was next to useless because of the water that made of it a shallow pond in winter and an oozy marsh covered with brakes and swamp grass throughout the rest of the year. Except as a haven for wild ducks, of which Myles managed to shoot a few every fall, the fen area might as well have been no part of the Grimsby lands.

The oldest inhabitant of the neighborhood could not remember when the Mallard Fen had been other than a morass; but now Myles proposed to drain it and to turn the whole muddy area into arable land. There

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was a narrow valley which ran from the lower end of the fen and joined that of Oxbow River nearly half a mile below. This, no doubt, in some long-past age, had furnished an outlet for a lake which had occupied the space of Mallard Fen and a much greater area round about. But the water level in the swamp was now some feet below the floor of this valley, and no stream flowed through the ancient outlet save when torrential storms made the swamp into a lake again and flooded for a week or so the surrounding fields.

The floor of the valley was grass grown and wholly free from rocks and trees; and the soil was a deep, soft loam that could be spaded without much loosening with pick or bar. The making of a waterway, while a heavy task, seemed not impossible of accomplishment, even with the limited forces of the farm. Just what it involved Myles could not estimate, until one day he rode to Shrewsbury and borrowed surveyors' tools of Engineer Thomas Bisbee, an old friend of Sir Anton. With these and the knowledge gained in an hour's talk with Bisbee, Myles measured the length of the ditch and found the depths of shoveling that would be necessary at fifty-yard intervals along its course.

It turned out that the ditch would be eight hundred yards in length and from two to seven feet in depth. From Myles' description of the fen, Engineer Bisbee had roughly estimated that a ditch as low

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as its lowest point and four feet wide at the bottom would be ample for the work.

The next morning Myles and old Laurence with the two tenant farmers, who as Myles had discovered could lawfully be called upon for two weeks' service in the year upon the Manor Farm, began work with shovels and mattocks. For a fortnight they labored manfully, but long before that time had elapsed they had all realized that with such a force the ditch could not be finished in six months of steady digging. Winter was at hand, with the hard freezing of the ground, and Myles had hoped to have his waterway opened in time to drain the marsh and allow him to break its sod in the spring. But for a happy thought which came to him while driving his great plow along the line of the excavation to soften the ground for the shovels, he would have been obliged to admit defeat and to postpone the completion of the work for a year, if not for longer.

It came to him that a huge shovel might be made, to be drawn by the horses, and to scoop the earth from the ditch as much faster than hand shoveling as the work of a plow was faster than that of a spade for turning the soil of a field. That night he spent three hours in drawing rough sketches of this unheard-of device, and the next morning set the old blacksmith at Belford at work upon it. Two days later Myles appeared on the ditch bank with the new machine. Old Laurence most doubtingly and unwillingly assisted

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by driving the horses while his young master held the handles and dumped the loads. Before the day was over Myles had demonstrated that with this tool he could move more earth than a score of shovelers.

The next day half the people for miles around came and stood for hours in the valley, viewing the operation of the Devil's Shovel, as they had unflatteringly named Myles' invention. Good progress was made nevertheless; and by sundown Myles, and his father as well, were convinced that the problem was solved.

The freeze did not come till the middle of December, and by that time the new waterway was complete from the river bank to the Willow Slough, the lowest spot in Mallard Fen. For a week or more it carried a considerable flow of water, then this diminished to a feeble trickle, for the marsh was drained. Even the heavy storms which shortly followed failed to raise the waters again; and it was clear that a hundred fertile acres had been added to the Manor Farm.

Through the early months of the next year the Parliament seemed to be steadily winning in its long struggle against the Crown. Bill after bill for securing and defending the rights of the people was passed by both Houses and received the royal seal.

But the King soon gave ample evidence that all his yieldings had been acts of policy merely and that he had no real intention of changing his course. He regarded himself as the divinely appointed leader of the people of the three kingdoms, and always either

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openly or secretly denied any right on their part to question his acts. Now it was plain from numerous words and deeds that Charles looked upon his assent to popular measures as acts performed under duress or under the pressure of violent threatenings, therefore not binding at all upon his conscience and only to be observed until such time as he could gather the strength to repudiate them.

The upland fields at Grimsby were plowed and sown by the middle of May; and Myles attacked the fenland with his great breaking plow and a four-horse team. A good stout laborer had been secured to work regularly with old Laurence, and the affairs of the farm went forward apace. At intervals through the summer, as other work permitted, the breaking of the fenland sod was resumed; and early in the fall the entire tract, now thoroughly drained and sweet, was sown to upland grasses.

At the time of the first snowfall the barns contained a greater store of hay and grain than at any time for twenty years. The dairy herd was more than twice as large as it had been when Myles returned from London, and their flock of sheep had been increased fourfold. A pair of colts was being raised to replace the old work horses. And all this stock and its increase for many seasons would have ample provender from the reclaimed land. In eighteen months of strenuous labor and planning Myles had more than tripled the productiveness of the farm.

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Early in January of that winter, armed emissaries of the King forced their way into the House of Commons and endeavored to arrest five of the leading members of the popular party. Soon after, the Queen went abroad to buy arms for the Royalist forces; and throughout the spring and summer both sides were arming and organizing their adherents for the struggle that all realized could not much longer be delayed.

CHAPTER IX

POOR MAN'S LAW

WHEN the second harvest after Myles' return to Grimsby had been safely stored in the barns a brief period ensued in which the affairs of the manor farm made less insistent demands and Myles could devote some days to other interests. He renewed acquaintance with his boyhood friends at Belford, attended some of the matches at archery and singlestick that were held on the village green, and spent many happy hours in tramping through the Grimsby woods in quest of hares or moorfowl or in lying in wait for the ducks that still at times alighted at the Willow Slough.

One day when he had ridden to Shrewsbury on an errand connected with the wool marketing, he chanced to meet Arthur Hinsdale at the inn, and the two spent an hour over a well-laden table in delightful reminiscence of their meeting on Heatherington Road and the journey that followed. Myles chanced to speak of the duck shooting at Grimsby, and Arthur eagerly proposed that they spend a day or two together at this sport ere the snows made traveling difficult. So it was arranged that they should ride at once to Grimsby

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and be on the lowlands early the following morning.

At dawn they were lying, with fowling pieces ready and matches alight, in a covert of rushes overlooking the slough. Luck was not with them, however, for the mallards avoided their hiding place, and when the sun was an hour high the hunters abandoned it to skirt the edges of the fen land in search of other game. Soon they were among the sapling oaks and beeches of the Grimsby woods. There in the course of an hour or two they shot a pair of grouse and a long-legged hare and caught a fleeting glimpse of a mottled doe that had wandered into the sprout land from the woods of Lord Upton, half a mile away.

At noon they made camp fire beneath a stunted willow, on the marshes several miles from Grimsby, and roasted the meat for the satisfaction of ravenous appetites. But a raw and searching wind having sprung up from the northwest, they lingered not overlong at picking the bones. The hunters were now on the common land that stretched for some miles on the banks of Wenham Brook, and they walked briskly onward, hoping at each turning of the path to come upon a flock of mallards at their feeding in the reedy hollows near the stream bed.

No game of any sort appeared, however, and they began to think of returning. When the sun was low in the west they left the edge of the stream and ascended through some rocky pasture land to a wooded

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hilltop which was surmounted by a great crag from which the country might be surveyed for long distances in every direction. From this point they could see the village of Duvaney, a mile or two ahead; and Myles, knowing that this was at least a dozen miles from home, proposed that they procure horses there for the journey back to Grimsby.

Just beyond the village lay the splendid woods of Duvaney Park with the chimneys of the manor house just visible over the treetops. Far off to the right another forest formed a part of the skyline where rose the steepest heights of the region. This wood, which seemed of huge old trees, covered a wide expanse of hilly and broken land and extended down a narrow vale till it nearly reached the edge of the moor they had been traversing.

"There!" exclaimed Arthur, pointing to the distant hilltops, "were we in those woods yonder, with an hour or two of daylight, I'll wager we'd come on birds enough, and maybe a buck beside, to make excuse for our travel."

"Maybe so," answered Myles slowly, "but unless I much mistake, we might in that neighborhood come on those who'd make us the hunted ones in our turn; and indeed if we came through with whole skins we might have cause for thankfulness."

"What mean you by that? What beasts are now in England that we need fear?"

"None of the four-footed sort, I'm sure; but I be-

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lieve that is the place known as Doolick Wood, where lodges a band of freebooters whose deeds in this countryside for some years now may well put to shame the bears and wolves. Yes, I'm sure 'tis the very place."

"Ha! a robber band! Now this is something like. Who is their leader, and how does he 'scape hanging?"

"Why, his name is Sir Thornton du Lac, though the people hereabouts and all whom I hear mention them have long called him and his followers 'the Doolicks,' that way of saying it coming more naturally to our tongues. For many generations, and up to some five years ago, Sir Thornton and his forbears were lords of vast domains on this and the other side of that range of hills. But idleness, drunkenness and gaming did their worst for them as for many another ancient house. The usurers took some of their lands, and others were sold for half their worth to pay the debts that had been made with cards and dice. And at last the Du Lacs came to utter ruin with the sale of Minturn Castle which had been the family seat since the days of the Conqueror. All that was left to them was a single farmstead, which, if I mistake not, stands at the head of that valley yonder, and has about it some half dozen acres of tillage land. That too was heavily mortgaged, but no bailiff has dared set foot on the rocky path to Doolick Wood since Sir Thornton sent back the first so mauled and cudgelled

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that he must be tied into his saddle to save him from falling."

"Upon my word!" cried Arthur, "an oldtime gentleman, indeed! But who has he for followers?"

"Why the old knight has four stout sons who might bestir themselves to make an honest livelihood now that their patrimony is wasted, or at the least take service as soldiers abroad. But apparently they have no such thoughts. They have gathered about them a score or more of bloody-handed ruffians whom they call servants or retainers, and they harry the countryside at will on pretense of collecting rents or other dues from the tenants on their ancient holdings. Some of these give willingly of their money and goods out of loyalty to the house to which their fathers gave allegiance; but others refuse, as is their right, to pay their rents a second time and to those who have no lawful claim. The upshot is that the gold and the cattle are taken with the strong hand; and very few there are who dare protest. One such was hanged by the Du Lacs to an apple tree in his dooryard, and another, who seized a musket to protect from seizure a pair of colts he had raised and broken, was left riddled with bullets by the door of his barn. Thieves and murderers—that's what they are! They boast of ancient lineage, but I'd be prouder of my stock if I could trace it but two generations and those were of honest, clean-handed folk."

"How comes it they have not been taken or slain

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ere this? Have you no magistrates in these parts?"

"Aye," growled Myles, "magistrates we have in plenty, such as they be. Sir Gilbert Duvaney yonder has held the King's commission for twenty years. And he is sharp enough too, in execution of the laws that seem to him wise and necessary. Twice, to my knowledge, he has sent poor men to their deaths for sheep stealing, and he tolerates no vagrants or idlers at Duvaney Village. But this matter of the Du Lacs is far different. These are people of as good blood as his own—or better maybe; they lay some sort of claim to the lands they harry, and, most important of all, they are fighting men of such courage and skill as to make it impossible for him to deal with them with any posse he might assemble in the neighborhood. The country folk are mortally afraid of the Du Lacs, and 'twould take a company of soldiers to batter down the stone walls of their house up there and take them prisoners. And so long as he and his friends are not assailed, Sir Gilbert will do nothing. 'Tis thus our laws are executed. If the time ever comes when I hold a magistrate's commission, I swear I'll go to Doolick Wood, with soldiers and cannon, if need be, and bring those red-handed scoundrels to justice."

"Ah, well!" said Arthur carelessly, "these are troublous times, with King and Parliament so at odds that none knew certainly who *should* execute the laws. Perhaps Sir Gilbert does as well as may be when all's known."

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“Arthur,” cried Myles, springing up from the ledge on which he had been sitting and gazing almost fiercely into the smiling face of his companion, “ ’tis not only the *execution* of our laws that’s at fault but the *making* of them. See you not that they are made both *by* and *for* the men of wealth and position, and that they have wondrous little care for those who do the work of the world and suffer most of its hardships? Look now! If poor men had a voice in our Parliaments and courts in proportion to their numbers, do you think they’d punish with death the stealing of a sheep or the pulling down of a bit of wall, and for years pass over such doings as those of Sir Thornton du Lac and his crew? ’Tis not in reason.”

“Nay, there are many things must be righted when Heaven comes on earth,” returned Arthur. “But I for one do not look to see the change much sooner. As near as I can tell, there have always been gentle and simple—those who ruled and those who obeyed—and for the life of me I cannot see how it could be otherwise. But now tell me, has not one of these Du Lacs the name of William? If so, I think I’ve had the honor of making his acquaintance.”

“Aye, surely. William du Lac is Sir Thornton’s eldest son.”

“A man of thirty or thereabouts, with mustachios like a Spanish don?”

“The same. Where have you seen him?”

“ ’Twas in London, one night but a year ago. I

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had been to see Gil Lovelace at the theater, and was returning at eleven o'clock or so when I noted bright lights at Dunham Place. You recall Jack Dunham at La Salle's?"

"Yes, and Tom, his brother."

"Right—two lads of eighteen and twenty who were growing up much too fast, and stood much in need of sundry lessons in the ways of the world. Well, it seems they'd been having one that night, for when I entered they had just quitted a game at cards with a tall, mustachioed bravo whom they introduced to me as William du Lac. They had met him at a club, and he had been teaching them the newest play at such a rate that he had just pocketed the last of their guineas. I was invited to learn the game also, but declined for two reasons—first, I had but half a crown in my pocket, and second, even if I had been better supplied, I would have been shy of such an opposite as this Du Lac, who seemed to me something in the way of professional brawler and gamester. So we did not play; and Du Lac beguiled the time for half an hour with tales of the greatness of his family and their wondrous long descent. I think he claimed they issued from no less a personage than Lancelot of the Lake."

"Aye, that's William of Doolick Wood, sure enough. I've often heard they made that boast."

"Well, we tired in time of the exploits of his ancestors; and when we began to yawn, he took himself

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off, his pouch well stuffed with the Dunhams' guineas. I had some matter to discuss with Jack, so declined the offer of his company and did not leave the house till some five minutes later.

"When I was halfway home, and trudging through the muddiest of lanes, I heard a noise of oaths and blows ahead of me, and, running forward, saw a gentleman beset by two ruffians with knives and cudgels. He was backed against a wall and was using his sword full manfully, but the thieves were brawny fellows who came at him like hounds at a boar and soon might have had the better of it. I ran up with a yell and made a pass at one of them, and nicked him somewhat, I believe. Thereupon they both took to their heels, and left me looking into the face of the man they had meant to rob and whom I now saw to be this William du Lac. The moment he recognized me he overwhelmed me with his thanks, and even went so far as to offer me the half of his evening's winnings, saying that but for my assistance the whole might by that time have been in the possession of the cutthroats who had waylaid him. I had no mind to such division, and we parted ten minutes later at the door of the villainous inn where he had his lodging as near to being friends as might be. He made many offers of his service; but from that time I have never seen him—nor wished to."

Myles laughed heartily at the wry face with which Arthur concluded his story.

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"Faith!" he chuckled, "such a gallant rescue deserved a fitter object, for, if you had but known, that brawl in the lane was simply a falling out among thieves, at which time, according to the proverb, honest men should come into their own. But now I see the lights at the cottage windows yonder, and bethink me we should be making toward the high road ere 'tis any darker. How would it please you to stop at the village inn to-night and go on with our hunting to-morrow?"

"Aye, surely," answered Arthur. "But have we any prospects of better sport than to-day? Our game pouches are still as flat as a last year's news-letter."

"I have a thought," said Myles as he led the way rapidly down the hill, "that we may so plan our hunting to-morrow as to bring down as many ducks as we will care for. Somewhere in Duvaney Village there lives a man whom we had ten years ago on the Grimsby farms. John Blackie is his name, and, with all his many faults, he is a right good fellow and just the sort for our purpose. He has the greatest store of woodcraft—the snaring of foxes and badgers and such beasts; he knows the season and the favorite feeding places of every sort of wild fowl; and he has a wonderful skill with bow and arrows. Not many use the old weapons nowadays, but John Blackie can kill more game with them than most men can with firearms. He taught me to shoot the bow when I was a little lad, and I grew so fond of it that even

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now I sometimes wish no other weapon were used for the hunting, that the game might last the longer. But John Blackie lost his farm some years back—perhaps because he loved hunting and archery better than plowing and delving—and he's lived since then as a jack-at-all-trades in the village here. If we can get him to row a boat for us to-morrow on Wenham Pond and the marshes thereabouts, I doubt not we shall fill our game bags, for he will know every covert and feeding ground."

"Good!" cried Arthur. "Do you know his house?"

"No, but we will soon find it. Every lad in the village will surely know John Blackie, unless he's greatly changed from my remembrance. Let us hurry, for he'll be returning by now from any work he's had."

Soon the youths were on the main street of the village, where the first urchin they met pointed out John Blackie's cottage. It was a rickety wooden structure at the bottom of an alley, and its surroundings spoke all too plainly of the poverty of its occupants. The early winter twilight was deepening into night, and the chilling wind of the afternoon had become a howling gale. The puddles in the wretched footway were already filmed with ice, and the muddy ground between them was solidly frozen. A loose board shutter on a neighboring dwelling banged distressfully in the wind, and all the inhabitants of the neighborhood had betaken themselves within doors.

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It seemed at first that there were no lights in the Blackie cottage, and Myles had begun to think that all the family must be from home when he espied the faint glimmer of a candle from a half-boarded-up window at the rear. Seeing this, he approached the door and knocked vigorously; but although the loose panels rattled hideously, sending clamorous noises all about, he obtained no response and was once and again obliged to repeat his summons.

At last shuffling footfalls were heard within; a dim light appeared on the threshold, and the door was slowly and hesitantly opened.

A woman, apparently still young in years, though already bent and gray with work and care, stood in the passageway, trembling with the cold and gazing fearsomely at the hunters. Her hair was disordered and her drawn and pain-filled countenance plainly showed the marks of recent tears. Two round-eyed children, three or four years old, clung to her skirts and sought to hide behind her. She uttered no word of greeting, and Myles hastened to make known his errand.

"Is this John Blackie's house? Is he at home?"

"Home?" echoed the woman bitterly, "know ye not he'll never more be home in this world?"

"Oh, is he dead, then?" asked Myles gently. "I had not heard."

"He's no dead, sir;" wailed the woman, "but well he might be. He's in the jail now there at the Town-

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house; and I'm thinking he'll never coom from there but to his hanging. 'Twas this very day they took him for the deer killing."

"Who took him?"

"The game wardens—Sir Gilbert's men. And they had his arms tied wi' rope, and they were leading him like a sheep-killing dog. I saw them in the road and run to him and he telled it to me. 'Twas half an hour ago. And, oh, my poor little ones! They'll come on the parish at last. We's had no meat in the house for a month and more. 'Twas that made John go for the deer, and all I could say wouldna hold him."

Again the tears ran down the poor woman's face, and she tried in vain to dry them with her apron. She sobbed heartbrokenly, and one of the children joined her with a frightened whimper. Myles gazed at the floor for a space, while Arthur stamped violently on the frozen ground, cleared his throat loudly and turned away.

"Are you not more frightened than need be?" said Myles at last. "Surely Sir Gilbert would not send to—to his death a man of Duvaney Village here for a thing like that."

"Oh, *would* he not, sir?" sobbed the woman. "I wish I believed he wouldna. 'Tis twice within two years he's sent men to the Shrewsbury Court that had them hangt for the sheep stealing. 'And Sir Gilbert thinks far more o' one of his deer than o' any sheep."

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Arthur turned to Myles and spoke in a strange, gruff voice :

"Let us go to this Sir Gilbert Duvaney and make him see the right of this. Men are not dogs to be used this way, if it is old custom."

"Aye, that's what we'll do," answered Myles eagerly. "Never fear, goodwife, we'll bring John safely out of this. I am Myles Delaroche, son of Sir Anton of Grimsby, and I knew your man when I was a little lad. Many's the good day's hunting we had together before ever he came to Duvaney ; and I'll stand by him now."

He drew a gold piece from his pouch and pressed it into the woman's hand.

"Here's somewhat to buy meat and bread till we have your man back again."

"And here's somewhat more for good measure," cried Arthur, following his friend's example with a pair of guineas. "Come, Myles, let's to the manor and have done with this matter before we eat. We'll sup the easier for it."

They turned away up the lane, followed by poor Dame Blackie's tremulously uttered blessings, and hurried through the village to the Park. There, a furlong from the road, stood the gray stone walls and towering chimneys of Duvaney Manor, the most pretentious country seat for many miles around. At the door a liveried servant received Myles' message to the baronet, and soon the two friends were ushered

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into the hall. Sir Gilbert was talking with two of his gamekeepers, and, after coming forward to greet Myles and acknowledge his introduction of Arthur, begged them to be seated for a moment while he finished a trifling matter on which he was then engaged.

Returning to the foresters, Sir Gilbert resumed the discussion which the entrance of the visitors had interrupted. The baronet was a burly fellow, somewhat past middle age, with reddish hair and beard and a countenance of much the same hue. His voice was loud, and his speech plentifully interspersed with oaths and obscenity, though he seemed at the moment in high good humor. A half-emptied brandy bottle on the table, flanked by a water pitcher and two dingy tumblers bespoke the entertainment that had occupied his afternoon, and a certain deliberateness of speech, together with a fishy gleam in his prominent eyes told of one whose special pride was in carrying his liquor well. It would have been too much to say that Sir Gilbert was drunk, for his step was firm and his tongue as yet under perfect control. But, as Myles reflected dubiously, an assertion that he was sober would have been a still greater departure from the truth. Even while the baronet had been speaking with them Myles had nearly decided to postpone their errand till the morrow in the hope of a better outcome.

But Sir Gilbert's first words to the foresters made it plain that no such course was possible.

"A good piece of work, by the Lord Harry!" he

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declared. "We'll have him up for's hearing at nine o'clock in the morning, and Tod Crouner can take him in the cart and have him in Shrewsbury Jail before dark. A good piece of work, my lads! 'Twas the second time within a year a deer had been taken, but 'tother poacher 'scaped us. By the Lord! he might have been this same Blackie fellow. Was this an arrow, too, did ye say?"

"Aye, sir," answered one of the gamekeepers eagerly, "'twas a broad arrow like what we used of olden time. Not many do use them now."

"No, by the Lord Harry! 'Tis now become a poacher's weapon solely, and well fitted too, for it makes no noise. But there's one will shoot no more arrows. Hanging Harriman is on the bench at Shrewsbury, and he never lets slip a chance to do full justice on thieves and poachers. He's one of the good old sort. I would we had more such. But just where was this fellow taken? Was it near the pad-dock?"

"No, sir, 'twas over near the Common's head—close by that new fence that goes by the Lookout Rock."

"Hum!" said the baronet meditatively. "You're sure 'twas within the fences?"

"Oh, yes, sir, he was in that willow thicket by the brook there; and 'twas against the fence we penned him—Jem here coming from the other way but just in time."

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“Well, then, be sure of it when I ask you to-morrow. We want no talk of his being outside—no slips that some lawyer chap can hang an argument on. I mean this business shall put a stop to all poaching on Duvaney lands for a dog’s age. You can go now, but be here at nine or sooner in the morning, and be ready to swear to what you say.”

The gamekeepers touched their forelocks and withdrew, and Sir Gilbert turned to his visitors.

“Well, gentlemen, I must apologize for keeping you thus waiting; but you see how it is. These little matters must have their turn. Now let me send for some fresh tumblers and I’ll join you in the King’s health.”

“Many thanks, Sir Gilbert,” replied Myles, quickly, “but pray excuse us for the time. We have a matter of business to discuss with you, and for now would rather be forward with it.”

“Well, then,” replied the baronet, surlily, “let’s hear this business that’s so urgent it cannot wait for a friendly glass. Have ye news from London? Are the Puritans up in arms over the jailing of some of their Parliament ranters?”

“No, sir, we have no news from London. ’Tis about this very matter of which you were talking but now with the gamekeepers. This man, Blackie, was a Grimsby man ten years ago. I knew him well. He’s no bad fellow in the main, and I’d willingly do aught that may be necessary to save him from the consequences of this folly.”

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Sir Gilbert's face had darkened ominously. The moment Myles was done he burst out:

"The man's a poacher and a thief. 'Tis the second time now to my knowledge he has killed my deer within a mile of this very house. An example should be made of such a vagabond."

"I'll take him to Grimsby with me," urged Myles, "and my father and I will be responsible for his future conduct. We'll see to it he never comes again within sight of Duvaney."

"Not if I know it, you won't, Master Delaroche," roared the baronet. "A plague on your meddling in this affair that's none of yours. What of all the other thieves and rascals in Duvaney whom this fellow has taught to take my game—and my sheep and pigs as well, for aught I know?"

"If he be such a ringleader in mischief," answered Myles, hotly, "you should easily be able to manage the rest when he is gone. 'And there's no need of a hangman's noose to accomplish that."

"Faugh!" sneered the other with a look and gesture of utter contempt. "What does a young cock of your sort know of the task of keeping peace and order on an estate like this? I'll have you remember I'm sworn to enforce his Majesty's laws hereabouts, and that does not sort with letting every lousy rascal go free for misdeeds wherein he's caught red-handed."

"It seems to sort well enough," cried Arthur Hinsdale, who now sprang to his feet and confronted the

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baronet, "with letting those go free who've done a hundred times the law breaking that this John Blackie has. I hear nothing of your arresting any of the Du Lac crew that rob and murder hereabouts. Perhaps 'tis because they wear swords and pistols and know how to use them."

After this amazing attack Sir Gilbert stood for a moment as though paralyzed, his jaw working convulsively within his closed lips and his red-veined eyeballs seeming like to burst from his head. Arthur was standing but a yard away, his hands held firmly at his sides and his black eyes fixed menacingly on the baronet's face. When at last Sir Gilbert answered it was with a long series of blood-curdling oaths. Coming in time to the end of his resources of this sort, he roared:

"Here you—young what's-your-name—can you handle a weapon yourself, or do you only talk about them? If you can, by all the Imps of Hades, you shall have opportunity. Here's rapiers or broadswords—whichever you choose. Delaroche will second you, and I'll quickly find a man to stand behind me. Then we'll see whether aught I do or leave undone is through the fear of weapons. May I be palsied if I don't pin you to the wall like a rabbit-skin put up to dry."

"With all my heart," cried Arthur, now gay and debonair once more. "You do me great honor, indeed, Sir Gilbert Duvaney. And I on my part hope to

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hold you some little time in play before you perform that graceful spitting that you speak of. Prithee let's have in that friend of yours and get to work."

Breathing like a foundered horse and with a face of the hue of flame, Sir Gilbert turned away toward an inner door, but Myles Delaroche sprang toward him.

"Hold, both of you," he cried. "This quarrel is mine if it is any one's, and I do not choose to put it to the sword's decision."

Sir Gilbert paused with his hand on the knob, and Myles whirled about and confronted his friend. "Arthur," he pleaded, "we came here to save a poor man's life if we might. Do you think John Blackie will be in any better case if you run Sir Gilbert through the body? Will he not rather be in a far worse plight? Will not any judge feel impelled to deal harshly with him to vindicate the majesty of the law? Do you not see that if you persist in this you send the poor devil to the gallows?"

Arthur was silent, and Myles turned again toward the baronet. "Sir Gilbert Duvaney," he said, solemnly, "I ask you to forget the hasty words that have just been said on both sides and to listen to my request for mercy for that poor man. I'll take him away and he will never trouble you more."

"I'll see him in Hades first," growled Duvaney, "and you also."

Myles seized his hat from the table and that of

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Arthur as well. Taking his friend by the arm, he half coaxed and half forced him toward the door. A moment later the two stood in the wintry wind outside, and with some mutterings and backward glances Arthur suffered himself to be led down the walk to the manor gates. When they were in the roadway he came to a full stop and demanded:

"Well, Sir Peacemaker, what will you do *now* for John Blackie? It seems to me we're leaving him in the clutches after all."

"I'll go to-night," returned Myles, slowly, "and see old Lawyer Gibbon who lives here in the village. I'll get him to appear for Blackie in the morning. It may be he'll find some way to get him free."

"Ho! a likely chance," growled Arthur. "Living here at Duvaney, your lawyer will be in mortal awe of Sir Gilbert and all his works, and there's little he'll do for one Sir Gilbert has determined to punish. 'Twould be better help you'd be bringing John Blackie if you'd get together a dozen or so of stout fellows and break down the jail door to-night and let him give leg-bail."

"That may be," answered Myles, hesitatingly, "and I confess that I had thought of it. But the worst of such a way would be that most likely there'd have to be some violence, with perhaps the death or maiming of some innocent man. No, I'll fight this through by lawful means, and hope thereby to do more good than harm."

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"Then I prophesy you'll fail utterly," said Arthur, sulkily. "Sir Gilbert is now in a furious rage—thanks to me, no doubt—and he would send that man to the gibbet if it cost him half his estate. Once let Blackie be sent to Shrewsbury with the findings that will come from the justice court here, and not the King himself could save him."

"It may be so, but we will have done our best," answered Myles with a sigh.

"Well, then," declared Arthur, "if that's to be our best, I think I want no share in it. I'll start for Hinsdale to-night. If I appeared at the hearing here to-morrow, 'twould probably make matters worse. And though, no doubt, the ways of peace are best, I might be tempted beyond my strength."

"I shall be sorry to have you leave me, Arthur," said Myles, sadly, "but I must admit I think you're right as to the effect your presence might have on Sir Gilbert. Remembering what you said to him but now, he'd likely turn a deaf ear to any arguments whatever in John Blackie's behalf. But let us first to the inn for supper. If later you decide to leave, it may be you can there find a horse fit for the journey."

An hour later, when the friends had concluded a silent and gloomy meal at the inn, Arthur mounted and rode away toward Hinsdale, and Myles bent his steps toward the house of the lawyer.

CHAPTER X

REDBEARD

AND now, Master Gibbon, these being the facts, do you think we can save him?"

Concluding his recital of the Blackie case, Myles leaned forward in his chair in eager scrutiny of the lawyer's wrinkled countenance and breathlessly awaited his reply. But the veteran barrister was long past the age of hasty and ill-considered action and was not to be hurried into any rash statements. With his gaze fixed meditatively on the glowing coals in the grate, he took three or four deliberate pulls at his long-stemmed pipe and blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling before making answer. When he spoke it was slowly and precisely, but in a thin and cackling voice which contrasted oddly with the solemnity of his utterance.

"I think I may say, Master Delaroche, that there is a reasonable chance of our doing so. I take it there were no direct witnesses to the act itself; and that fact, if properly utilized, may save the prisoner from the infliction of the penalty otherwise due. Sir Gilbert, in his present state of irritation, might wish to proceed to extreme measures; but, fortunately, in

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this instance, such measures are beyond his jurisdiction."

"And what may we expect if the defense you plan is successful? Will the Court impose a fine or a term in jail for trespass or larceny?"

"Ah, no, Master Delaroche. This is a serious matter, and even though the evidence is wholly circumstantial, as I hope to establish, we can hardly expect Judge Harriman to pass it over thus lightly."

"What then is the likely penalty?"

"When such an offense is coupled with trespass," replied the lawyer, unctuously, "the penalty is death. However, we grow more merciful of late, and the capital sentence has not always been pronounced in recent years. His Gracious Majesty, the King, has expressed himself as favoring in these matters, as in so many others, the more gentle and lenient course. Where there are mitigating circumstances, or where there still exists some shred of doubt as to the guilt of the accused, it has become quite usual to substitute a much lighter punishment. In such instances the prisoner is merely branded on the forehead with the letter *T* and sent to the Colonies."

"My faith!" cried Myles, "a most merciful procedure, I'll be bound, and one for which an offender should be duly grateful. Merely to be branded for life as a thief and exiled! And I suppose the wife and children of such criminals are left perfectly free to starve to death in England."

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"Nay, not so fast, young sir," objected the lawyer. "I perceive that you have been listening to some of those who would blindly destroy the splendid structure of English law and custom and turn society upside down because all things are not adjusted to their notions of right and justice. 'Tis natural enough at your age, to be sure; but years and experience will bring wiser views. And as to the dependents of such offenders, such an outcome as you mention is by no means to be anticipated. I believe our system of parochial relief for the deserving poor is as good as any in Europe. Instances of actual starvation are not many. But I am not defending our penal system—though, to speak truth, it is in many respects an admirable one—I merely state the facts as I know them."

"Well, then," said Myles with a sigh, "you will endeavor to show that Blackie is not guilty as charged. Have you any hope of convincing Sir Gilbert of that?"

"Not much, I admit, but 'tis well to begin that way as a foundation for the defense we'll make at Shrewsbury. It will be best, I think, to regard the proceedings at to-morrow's hearing as merely formal, and by all means to avoid any words or actions that may further irritate Sir Gilbert. If we so conduct ourselves, it may be that he'll refrain from any further activity in the matter after he has committed the man for the Assizes. In that event we may be able to secure the lighter penalty. At any rate, my dear sir, we'll do our best."

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With this limited assurance Myles was obliged to be content. For an hour after leaving the lawyer's house he walked the frozen streets of the little town, thinking of the poacher's miserable plight and trying vainly to form a better plan on his behalf. Recalling more completely John Blackie's independent ways, his somewhat reckless though hearty and generous temper and his hatred of restraint, Myles began to doubt whether his old companion would regard the branding and transportation as at all to be preferred to the capital penalty. With Arthur's prediction as to Master Gibbon's attitude in mind, Myles considered for a moment the possibility of securing elsewhere a counselor to whom the ancient laws and usages were not such utterly sacred institutions and the Master of Duvaney Manor something less than a sovereign. He thought of Marcus Denby, and wondered whether Grimsby Manor could afford the sums necessary for that stout old Commoner's journey from London to conduct the case of its former retainer at the Shrewsbury Assize. But before he came to any conclusion as to the monetary side of the matter the doubt arose whether a barrister being especially brought from London for the defense would not result in prejudicing Judge Harriman's mind against the prisoner to an extent that would more than offset the value of such a counselor's services. However regarded, the situation was a gloomy one, and Myles finally went to his bed in a state of discouragement.

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Nevertheless he was astir before daybreak, and at the very earliest hour for visitors at the jail was admitted to John Blackie's cell. The poor fellow was almost speechless with gratitude for Myles' intervention on his behalf, and promised to follow his counsel in everything. Myles went over with him every phase of the deer killing and of his capture by the game wardens, but found no least circumstance upon which a valid defense could be founded. John had had no work for six weeks; and for most of that time his children had been in want of bread. The preceding afternoon he had taken his bow and arrows and had lain in wait in a willow thicket in Duvaney Park for two hours. Finally his opportunity had come and he had killed a fine buck, only to find himself a minute later between the two foresters and the park fence, which at that point was far too high for hasty scaling.

It was not until he had risen to go and had addressed a last question or two to the prisoner that Myles found the slightest reason for hope. The effect of one piece of information, incidentally mentioned by the prisoner, was such that Myles only waited to draw from him such details as his knowledge afforded, then hurried away to consult with the village schoolmaster and other local worthies who were able to supplement it. Then, with hurried thanks to his informers, Myles started again toward the house of Lawyer Gibbon. It was a dark and foggy morning, and the village streets were still almost deserted. The bar-

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rister, however, was already setting out toward the manor, for the hour set for the hearing was approaching. Meeting him at his gate, Myles turned and accompanied him, talking earnestly all the while though in tones too low to reach the ears of bystanders.

The lawyer seemed not favorably impressed with Myles' new plan. At the manor gates he paused and shook his head in a decided negative, and Myles redoubled his arguments. These were wholly ineffective, however, for all the way up the brick-paved path Master Gibbon continued to give visible signs of dissent and to mumble impatient protests. To escape from his young client's insistence, he hurried up the steps and knocked loudly at the door.

In a moment they were ushered into the presence of Sir Gilbert who sat at a small table in the hall which was littered with papers and account books. Evidently the baronet was now completely sober, but in an exceedingly bad humor. He gruffly acknowledged the lawyer's obsequious bow and somewhat nervous explanation of his business at the hearing, but paid no attention whatever to young Delaroche. After a moment he rose and led the way to a smaller room at the side of the house which was near the entrance used by such persons as jailers and gamekeepers and in which it appeared he was accustomed to hold court as local magistrate. In a moment the jailer appeared with his prisoner. Blackie's left wrist was manacled to the jailer's right, a chain some two feet long con-

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necting them. Immediately behind them came a stout constable, ready to render the jailer instant assistance should the prisoner become unruly. The two game wardens were already in the room.

The first of the wardens was sworn, and proceeded to tell the story of the poacher's capture much as Myles had heard it on the preceding evening. Lawyer Gibbon cross-examined him at length, in an apparently careless manner but so that it was evident to Myles, who knew his plan, that he intended to prove that no one had actually seen John Blackie discharge the arrow that had slain the deer and therefore that the prosecution must fail for lack of witnesses.

The evidence of the second game warden was much the same as that of his comrade as was also his examination on behalf of the defense. When this was concluded, there being no more witnesses, Master Gibbon made the motion that the prisoner be discharged since the accusation against him had failed of proof.

Sir Gilbert sat back in his great armchair, thrust his thumbs into his armpits and laughed long and loud.

"A fine argument that, Master Gibbon," he jeered, "when these fellows saw the deer fall from an arrow stroke and within a minute after caught this prisoner here with a bow in his hand."

"Nevertheless, the arrow stroke might have been the work of another person," replied the lawyer, evenly. "And we contend that such was, in fact, the case. I ask for the prisoner's discharge."

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The magistrate laughed again and cast a leering look at Myles. Then he cleared his throat loudly and sat erect, with the evident intention of pronouncing his findings; but Myles was beforehand. Springing to his feet, he addressed Lawyer Gibbon in a low, firm voice:

“Master Gibbon, do you not intend to bring forward the facts with which I acquainted you this morning?”

The barrister colored violently, then replied with a frown:

“No, Master Delaroche. I do not think it advisable.”

“Then I will do so myself,” cried Myles. “Sir Gilbert Duvaney, this man here is not guilty of the offense with which he stands charged. We will admit once for all that he discharged the arrow which killed the deer in question; but at that moment *neither he nor the deer were on the lands of Duvaney Park* or upon any other lands the entrance upon which would constitute trespass.”

“What nonsense is this?” demanded Sir Gilbert. “Jeremy, did you not swear that this fellow was taken within the fences?”

“Aye, sir,” replied the forester, “’twas this side of the fence that runs by Lookout Rock.”

“The part you speak of as the *new fence*, was it not?” asked Myles, quietly.

“Aye, we caught him against the fence. ’Twas

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too high for his climbing before we laid hold of him."

"Just so," said Myles. "Now, Sir Gilbert, that land is no part of Duvaney Park. Four years ago, without any warrant in law, your men inclosed a corner of the common land pertaining to the Village of Duvaney, and thus brought within the fences that otherwise surround Duvaney Park some ten acres of moor and woodland to which you have no lawful claim. John Blackie, a resident of Duvaney Village, has killed a deer upon that land, within the season when such killings are lawful to such residents. He is, therefore, wholly innocent of the charge upon which he has been arrested."

While Myles was speaking the baronet's lower jaw had dropped, his countenance had become blood red and his prominent eyes stared hideously. The instant the young defender had done the baronet bawled furiously in reply:

"By all the Imps and Devils! this is the worst effrontery to which I ever listened. And at a later time I hope to set forth my opinion of it with something else than words. That land was taken, as Master Gibbon here knows right well, in satisfaction of various rents and assessments due to the Manor from the village. It is mine, and I'd like to see any who'd dare attempt to take it from me."

"Have you papers to that effect?" inquired Myles, coolly.

"I neither know nor care," stormed the baronet,

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“whether any deeds or parchments have been drawn up regarding it. What I *do* know is that that land is now and will remain a part of Duvaney Park. Do you propose to prove otherwise?”

“That remains to be seen,” replied Myles. “The question now is—what disposition will you make of the matter now before us?”

“I commit the prisoner, without bail, for trial on this charge at the County Assize,” growled Sir Gilbert. “Master Constable, you will see to it that he is taken to Shrewsbury and lodged in the jail there before night.”

“If you persist in this course,” declared Myles, “I warn you that this man will be vigorously defended before the Court, and that the statement I have just made will be presented there with ample testimony to establish it.”

“Do so, if you choose,” yelled the other, “and devilish little good will it do you—or this fellow either. I’ll show you who’s master at Duvaney. And now clear out, all of you. I’m sick of the sight of you.”

The jailer, the constable and their prisoner started for the door at once. More deliberately Myles Delaroche followed them. Lawyer Gibbon lingered to speak with the baronet, and Myles could hear his thin voice raised protestingly and Sir Gilbert’s gruff tones in reply. Presently the whole party was on the foot path, the prisoner and his keepers half a dozen rods

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in advance of Myles and Sir Gilbert and the lawyer following him at a like distance.

At the gates they encountered a group of a dozen or more of men and boys who had been awaiting the result of the hearing. Most of these seemed friendly enough to the prisoner and regretful of the fate that was overtaking him, but one or two evil-looking fellows gave vent to yells of derision when they saw him still manacled to the jailer and thus learned that the charge against him had been confirmed at the hearing.

The knot of idlers trailed behind the jail party on its way to the Townhouse; and Myles followed at a little distance. He was deeply dejected for he had hoped to clear the prisoner at the hearing by taking the bold stand he had with regard to the common land; but now it appeared that he had been mistaken. Too late, Myles reflected that he would have been acting more wisely if he had let Lawyer Gibbon have his way at the hearing and had reserved the charge of illegal inclosure for use at the Shrewsbury trial. But what was done could not be undone, and Myles was more fiercely determined than ever to fight the matter through to a decision, and, at whatever cost, to procure for poor John Blackie a legal counselor who would make the most of his means of defense.

Sir Gilbert and the old lawyer had paused at the manor gates and now stood in earnest discussion. A brisk wind had sprung up and dispelled the early morning fog, and the whole scene was bathed in wintry

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sunlight. The jail party approached a road that crossed their way between the Park and the town and led to the open country beyond. On this road, and a furlong or so from the corner, stood a huge old barn of which the great door next the highway stood partially ajar. Myles, happening to glance in that direction, half consciously noted the legs of horses within and wondered whether this outlying building was one of the manor stables.

His eyes had left the doorway and were following the movements of the jailer and his companions, and his mind was busy with the problem of John Blackie's defense, when he heard cries of alarm from the group of followers near the crossing of the roads. Pointing fingers directed his eyes again to the stable; and he saw that the door had been flung wide open and half a dozen armed horsemen had issued from the space within.

Then terrified cries rang out from some of the villagers: "The Doolicks! Run. Run. 'Tis the Doolicks."

The members of the group that followed the prisoner lost no time in acting on this warning. They scattered like a flock of chickens that have sighted the hawk. Some leaped the hedge and hid in the ditch beyond; one crouched behind a tree; and the others ran back toward the Park gates as fast as their legs would carry them.

Myles was too much surprised for any action. He

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had no weapons with which to fight the robbers and no money or valuables to fall into their hands. So he merely stood still in the road and awaited the outcome.

The riders were some six or seven in number. They were led by a tall, mustachioed fellow whom Myles instantly recognized as William du Lac—he of the long and noble descent and the well-earned skill at games of hazard. Beside this leader rode another tall ruffian with a huge red beard and with a battered felt hat pulled low over his eyes. The whole party flourished swords and pistols and were filling the air with horrible threats and curses.

The jailer, the constable, and their prisoner had arrived at the crossing, and there stood as if petrified in the very tracks of the cavalcade. Such a party would seem little more likely than a group of beggars to afford any booty for highwaymen. What was Myles' amazement then, when the riders pulled their horses to a halt and surrounded this unlikely quarry. Two or three of the riders leaped to the ground and presented pistols at the heads of the terrified jailer and his companion officer of the law. Rough commands were given that they mount the horses from which the robbers had just dismounted, and these orders, not being instantly obeyed, were enforced with vicious pricks from the point of a dagger.

Bewildered and protesting, the jailer climbed upon the tall steed which had been ridden by Redbeard, and

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John Blackie, whose wrist was still held by the chain and manacle, was made to get up before him. The constable was likewise perched up before another of the freebooters, and the robbers who had so roughly assisted in this mounting sprang up behind some of their comrades. Redbeard seized the bridle rein of the horse that bore the jailer and his prisoner; and the whole party rode away at a furious gallop. In a moment the whole yelling crew had disappeared over a hilltop in the direction of Doolick Wood.

Sir Gilbert Duvaney and Lawyer Gibbon were still at the manor gates whence they too had witnessed the entire performance in the silence of utter bewilderment. The villagers began now to emerge from the shelter of the hedge and the ditch that ran beside it, and one crawled out from under the strawstack into which at first sight of the robbers he had burrowed like a fox run to earth. First of this individual then of the others, Myles made inquiry as to the coming of the Du Lacs and whether they had committed robberies or other crimes within the town. But he quickly found that the villagers had been as completely surprised as himself by the sudden appearance of the horsemen and were as much at a loss to explain their subsequent action.

A 'prentice lad ventured to the open door of the barn from which the Du Lacs had issued, then came back on the run, shouting that a dead man was lying on the floor within. Myles at once went to the build-

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ing and found the body of a man lying on the chaff at the farther end of the floorway. It was apparent, however, that this victim of outlaw violence had been merely bound and gagged and was not mortally hurt, for he struggled violently as Myles approached and turned upon him wide, beseeching eyes.

To cut the bonds and remove the kerchief that had stopped his mouth was the work of a moment. The poor fellow gasped and choked and presently sat up and looked about him. The villagers, who had by this time followed Myles into the barn, at once recognized the victim as Jem Foster of the Millgrange who during the winter stabled in the building a workteam that he used about the village. In a minute or two, with the help of a mug of ale hastily brought from the inn, Jem was able to tell what he knew of the raid; but this turned out to be so little that it left the occurrence fully as mysterious as before. It seemed that Jem had come to the barn at daybreak, as was his wont, to feed his horses. As soon as he had entered and shut the door, he was seized by two men who flung him down, stuffed the kerchief into his mouth and trussed up his arms and legs so that he could scarcely move. He had lain on the floor for what seemed half a day at least, listening to the talk and laughter of the robbers, but could gather no hint of what they meant to do. Then suddenly the doors had been thrown open and the whole crew had ridden forth. Poor Jem had thought they would fire the

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barn when they left it, and had almost given himself up for lost. He could hardly believe even yet in his rescue, and was in mortal fear of the raiders' return.

Seeing that nothing further could be learned from the villagers, Myles took himself to Blackie's cottage to give such assurance as he might to the goodwife. She had already heard the news of the scene at the crossroads, and, to Myles' great relief, seemed to regard what had occurred as being rather fortunate than otherwise.

"It's little they'll get in robbing him;" she said, "and though they make him join wi' them for thievery, I'm thinking he'll find a way to gi' them the slip at last. If 'tis to the woods they take him, John'll be well at home there and can handle himself wi' any man. At any rate, 'tis better than the Shrewsbury Jail and what he'd have from Hanging Harriman."

Myles assured her that he would stand by her husband in any event, and, after securing her promise to send him word as soon as she had any news of John's whereabouts, made his way back to the inn. There he secured a horse for the journey back to Grimsby.

A little after noon he rode up the path to the manor and left his mount with old Laurence. Entering the house through the kitchen passages, he strode into the main hall in search of his father whose aid he meant to enlist without delay. What was his amazement then when the only occupant of the room proved

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to be a tall fellow with a huge red beard, a low-drawn, broad-brimmed hat and long and ragged riding cloak, who rose from a chair near the fire and confronted him. The man was no other than the robber who had ridden beside William du Lac during the raid at Duvaney and who had been chiefly active in the capture of the jailer and the others.

Myles stared in utter bewilderment. What in the world could have brought the man to Grimsby? The other returned his look with one of fierce defiance. Finally when Myles had begun to think he must be dreaming and all the strange events of the last three hours a nightmare panorama, a loud and ringing laugh burst from the robber, his hat and beard were whisked away and thrown into the fire, and Arthur Hinsdale stood revealed.

At the sudden change of Myles' countenance Arthur laughed again and uproariously.

"Oh, Myles!" he gasped, as he strove to wipe away the tears that coursed down his cheeks, "they tell us to laugh and grow fat, and, with all my riding to-day, I have gained five pounds at least with laughing. Such a sight as you were, standing in the road there at Duvaney without so much as a table knife in your hands, yet with no more thought of running away than an oak tree. And Duvaney and the lawyer fellow, standing at the manor gates with their jaws fallen wide open! It was better than any comedy I've ever yet seen."

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By this time Myles was laughing too, while Arthur executed a hornpipe step in sheer abandonment.

"How could you place yourselves in that barn for ambush?" asked Myles after a time, "for it seemed certain none of the villagers knew of your whereabouts?"

"We entered the place as softly as so many mice at four o' the clock. At six the hostler came, and we bound and gagged him, as no doubt you have heard. We meant to take John Blackie and his noble guards on their way to the manor house; but 'twas all so thick and foggy they had passed the corner ere we knew, so we must needs await their return. 'Twas William du Lac's plan to take all three of them—for it seemed he must have his little jest at Sir Gilbert's expense—and I, who had won him to the expedition at some little labor, was not prepared to oppose him."

"And what became of them? Pray tell me."

"Oh, you should have seen them! 'Twas the perfect climax of our comedy. When we had reached the wood in the hollow there, a mile from the town, we put them down, and made the jailer unlock the iron cuff on John Blackie's wrist and fasten it upon that of the constable. And when we had them securely manacled together thus, we took away the key and flung it into a bog. Then some of the Du Lac men hauled off the boots and socks from these prisoners, and when they stood barefooted in the road—

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way, William du Lac drew his pistol and bade them run for home as fast as their legs might take them. He assured them most cruelly that to escape whole-skinned they might have to run faster than a pistol ball could go, and bade them do their best. So they started off like a yoke of ill-broken steers that have run from their master ere they could be fastened to the plow. The way was rough and flinty and their bare soles most tender, so presently they slackened speed in order to somewhat better pick their footing. At that we fired a pistol volley that went safely over their heads, but started them forward like a shot at a rabbit that runs for cover. The last we saw they were half way back to the town and still going mightily. Oh, I shall never again see the like of it."

"And John Blackie, what of him?"

"John Blackie is by this time well on his way to Hinsdale with a note from me to Oswald, our head gamekeeper, to give him work as warden. 'Tis a day's journey from Duvaney. Sir Gilbert need never set eyes on him again, and he'll do well enough with us. After a month or so I'll manage to send word to his wife to take the little ones and join him. Oh, such a battle as we've had, with no one killed or maimed! I think I shall give over all other occupations and venture forth on the road as knight-errant and reliever of the oppressed. What say you, Master Solemn-Face? Can I not carry it off as well as ever Don Quixote?"

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Sir Anton and Mistress Delaroche now entered, and soon the whole party was gathered about the dinner table. The elders had heard the whole story before Myles' arrival, but were not averse to hearing it repeated in the comical style of which Arthur was master. His perilous night journey to Doolick Wood thus became a burlesque, mock-heroic tale, and his presentation to stern old Sir Thornton, who strongly suspected him of being a spy, a bit of delicious comedy. But all three of his auditors well knew the ways of the du Lacs and their followers and realized to the full the dangers Arthur had braved in behalf of their former tenant. So, at the end of all his merry recounting, their comments were no laughing ones; and they thanked him from their hearts for his execution of a bold and generous design.

CHAPTER XI

LIEUTENANT DELAROCHE

IN July of the following summer a troop of cavalry was organized at Belford by the emissaries of the Parliament. Old John Boynton, who had served on the Continent twenty years before, was chosen as captain, and, by unanimous consent, Myles Delaroche was made lieutenant. Each volunteer furnished his own horse and equipment, and a motley array was the result. Shaggy fetlocked plow horses stood in line with long-limbed hunters of Arabian strain, and the maintenance of even ranks was far beyond the powers of the troopers.

Some of the men wore the steel caps and breastplates and swung the heavy broadswords that had done duty a century and more before, while others had neither swords nor armor, but came bearing musketoon and fowling pieces which they stoutly averred were far more deadly. Most of the recruits were farmers and small landowners, and thus well used to riding, but few of them had ever borne arms save for brief periods with the country trainbands. The Parliament commissioners had managed to send from some armory near London three chests of arms, including a

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hundred or more of matchlock pistols and a dozen cavalry swords. Finally all the recruits, to the number of ninety odd, were equipped with the pistols and with heavy, long-bladed swords of one fashion or another, and the other firearms were discarded as not adapted to use by mounted men.

For three afternoons each week the company practised cavalry formations and the manuals of sword and pistol in a great upland pasture on the Grimsby Farm. Only two miles away an infantry company of the county militia under that fiery Cavalier, Sir James Tilbury, was likewise drilling and maneuvering. There was much speculation as to which party would gain the victory if a collision ensued; and ambitious youths on both sides had already selected the particular antagonists upon whom they hoped to demonstrate the power of a righteous cause. But such a battle never took place, for on the twenty-second of August King Charles raised the royal standard at Nottingham, and called his loyal vassals to his side. Immediately Sir James Tilbury departed thence with his whole company, and the vicinity of Belford was left in the possession of the Parliamentary forces.

Captain Boynton soon taught his men the rudiments of cavalry drill; and Myles, who had been a fair pistol shot and a master of the broadsword and single stick even before his sojourn in London, trained them as best he might in groups of a dozen or more in the use of their weapons. Eight or ten of the

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young recruits were sons of country squires; and three of the older men were veterans of Continental wars. These already had some knowledge of sword play, though none of them approached young Delaroche in this respect. Myles quickly singled them out and placed them in charge of squads of beginners, reserving for his own training those who had already made a little progress. He had the gift of inspiring enthusiasm in those who worked under his direction, and his frank manner and his tireless energy did much to offset the natural jealousy felt by men older than himself who found themselves subject to his orders. Myles worked as hard and perspired as freely on the afternoons devoted to drill as if he had been holding the breaking plow in the fen lands; and in a surprisingly short time his pupils had gained a measure of swordsmanship surpassing that of many long-trained cavalymen. Captain Boynton freely admitted the superior abilities of his lieutenant in this branch of military training, and proudly enough displayed to Sir Anton Delaroche and a few other old soldiers who came to watch the maneuvers the work of these raw recruits when paired against one another at single-stick and the sword drill of the entire troop under Myles' command.

With the pistol the men did not do so well. Most of them had no experience with firearms save for the huge blunderbusses which they had used in hunting ducks or foxes; and these with their cannonlike roar

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and violent recoil were nearly as frightful behind as before. Many of the recruits could never cure themselves of the habit, which came from such experience, of shutting both eyes when they let off their pieces; and this flinching with the sidewise twitch that nearly always accompanied it, was not favorable to marksmanship. The firing of one of these heavy weapons on horseback, while moving at a trot or a canter, seemed to the novices a considerable feat in itself, to say nothing of holding an accurate aim meanwhile. Before a month had passed Myles came to the conclusion that the great Swedish conqueror, Gustavus Adolphus, had been right in maintaining that the sword was still the effective weapon of the cavalryman.

Captain Boynton, however, had been trained in a school of arms which exalted the pistol as the weapon with which a deadly blow might be struck at many times sword's reach. No sooner had he familiarized the troopers with the ordinary maneuvers of company drill than he began teaching the assault with pistol fire, instantly followed by a wheel to the left or right and retirement to the rear for reloading. After a few days of this training, the troop would manage to dash forward and deliver a more or less scattering volley at an imaginary enemy, then wheel about without too much confusion and retire for a hundred paces to a point where they would recharge their weapons. The rapidity with which this maneuver could be repeated

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was supposed to measure the effectiveness of a body of mounted soldiery.

Myles had sought most eagerly to perfect himself in all the movements directed by his superior; and he spent hours every evening in rehearsing them by means of small wooden counters which he moved about on a table and in discussing them with his father. The elder Delaroche, whose experience had been with the infantry, maintained that Captain Boynton was thoroughly grounded in the art of war and a most admirable drill master. With respect to most things Myles was disposed to accept this opinion; but he could not bring himself to believe that the fire-and-wheel-about maneuver would prove successful on the battlefield against a well-trained enemy. In the first place, he argued, not a quarter of the pistol bullets would reach their mark; and, in the second place, asked what would happen if the enemy cavalry withstood the volley, and then charged with drawn swords the instant the attackers had turned their backs. In such a posture he could see nothing but defeat and destruction. For men who were already in retreat and who had nothing in their hands but empty pistols would fall easy victims to a column of charging swordsmen, and their defeat might leave a fatal gap in the line.

Sir Anton pulled his beard thoughtfully while he considered this, and finally admitted that there was reason in it. But he was inclined to think the fire of the musketeers should check such a charge and pro-

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tect the temporary retirement of the cavalry. Myles was far from being convinced, but, bearing in mind his total inexperience in war, resolved to be very cautious in expressing his views to his captain and to learn all that he might meanwhile from observation and the opinions of veterans.

The next day he found that Captain Boynton had planned for a new exercise in swordsmanship that simulated battle conditions more closely than any they had yet essayed. A line of twenty head-posts, some six feet high and eight feet apart, had been erected at the farther end of their drill ground. These had been wrapped with old clothing and sacks, and were to represent a rank of opposing infantry. The captain drew up the troop in five ranks of eighteen or twenty men each and explained that at the word they were to charge at full gallop at the line of dummies and ride between them. Each man was to deliver as he passed a quartering stroke with his blade at the figure on his right, as though to shear the head of an enemy. Lieutenant Delaroche was to lead the charge while the captain posted himself at the right of the line to observe the effectiveness of the blows.

The men greeted this new exercise with enthusiasm; and Myles was delighted with a proof of the practical nature of his captain's ideas of military training. The troop thundered down gloriously upon the simulated enemy line, and every man delivered his stroke with a will. Nearly every blade reached its mark, and

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from some of the posts the wrappings were nearly cut away. Repetition of this maneuver with some variations occupied the whole afternoon. Twice it was necessary to send for more old sacks and straw to enwrap the post heads and save the blades of the troopers from being bent or broken on the wood. With each fresh trial the young troopers increased their command of their horses and weapons; and when they rode home in the twilight officers and men alike were confident they had gained a measure of skill that would count heavily in their favor when they faced actual enemies.

When the company assembled on the next training day the posts had been newly enwrapped, and another line had been placed eight feet behind them. Before the exercise began, however, Lieutenant Delaroche made a suggestion to his superior as they stood aside together, watching the sergeants who were reviewing and correcting the alignment of the ranks.

"Captain Boynton," he said, "would not our lines of figures serve as well for pistol as for sword practice?"

"Why, I see no reason why they would not," answered the veteran, after a moment's hesitation, "though I have never seen such drilling."

"Then I beg of you to let us try it," said Myles eagerly. "Here are fresh wrappings which will show the marks of our bullets. And it seems to me 'twill be a most useful exercise."

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"Well then," responded the captain with a smile, for he was both fond and proud of his second in command, "let it be so, if you will. Have the men sheath swords and load pistols. They have as much need to master the one as the other."

Myles gave the necessary commands; and the company was soon riding full tilt at the line. The ground rose sharply just beyond the posts, and Myles had taken the precaution to separate the ranks by fifty paces or more so that the bullets from the rearmost ranks might not endanger those before. He rode at the right of the foremost rank, and his shot was the signal for the volley. Each rank of horsemen delivered its fire as it closely approached the figures, and successively passed through the line and up the hill beyond. When the last had arrived at the summit they wheeled about in close formation and trotted back to the drill ground where with glowing face their commander awaited them.

"Well done!" he cried. "'Twas almost worthy of a troop of regulars. One or two more trials and you'll hold your lines as well as ever you do at drill without weapons. We surely make progress, my lads. Our work is not for nothing."

Myles had dismounted as he approached the captain. Now, after duly saluting, he ventured:

"Let us examine the figures, sir, and mark the hits that have been made."

"Ah! well bethought," replied the captain. "Let

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us count the bullet holes and see if any of our enemies have been left alive."

With his lieutenant at his side, the captain walked to the post line and began examining the wrappings for bullet marks. The first post was that past which Myles had ridden; and it showed where a bullet had entered squarely a half a foot from the top. Careful examination of the next post, however, revealed no marks at all; and the same was true of the next and the next. With growing irritation and dismay the captain closely scanned post after post; and it was not till he had reached the eighteenth in the line that another bullet hole was found. The second rank of dummies had escaped even more completely, for only one of the wrappings had been torn by a bullet, and that was a glancing blow that came within half an inch of missing altogether.

When the inspection had been completed the captain looked long and hard at Myles while a variety of emotions depicted themselves on his countenance. Myles gazed inquiringly in return, without offering any comment, and at last the captain said:

"I would never in the world have believed it but for my own eyes. A hundred men, shooting at two paces' distance, and only three strokes in all! 'At that rate 'twould make wondrous little difference if, when loading, they forgot their bullets altogether. 'Twould be as well that they were armed with popguns."

"They'll need much more of pistol practice, sir, be-

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fore they're fit for battle with such weapons," assented Myles.

"Much more!" echoed the captain, hotly, "They'd need to shoot fifty loads a day for a year together ere they could strike man-sized marks from the backs of running horses. You are right, Delaroche, in thinking the sword's the weapon for them. Henceforth we'll work with that alone. There'll ne'er be time to make pistoleers of these fellows. We must soon be on the march."

"I hear the King will enter Shrewsbury on the morrow," said Myles.

"Aye, Shrewsbury to-morrow, where he hopes for new contingents. And next he'll take up his march on London. Earl Essex, with twenty thousand of our men, is already on the road from Northampton; and if we do not receive orders soon to ride and join him, we may think they have forgotten us."

"In that event," suggested Myles, "it may be as well for us to ride toward Northampton on our own orders."

"Aye, and that we'll do," cried Captain Boynton. "If I have not orders within three days, we'll set forth without them. I'm sore afraid the fighting will be over and done with and we have had no share in it if we do not make haste. And after all our riding and sweating here, such an outcome would very ill suit me—or you either, as I can plainly enough see."

Myles smiled, but made no reply; and his superior

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turned to the company with the shouted command: "Sheath your pistols."

The rest of the afternoon was devoted to sword practice. Twenty times the troop charged down on the dummy line. Blades flashed as in a melee tournament of old; and the coverings were hacked from the posts again and again.

Before the men were dismissed that night they were given orders to hold themselves in instant readiness for the call. Two days later a rider came with messages from the Parliamentary headquarters; the troop was quickly assembled; fond good-bys were said, and Myles and his comrades rode away to the war.

CHAPTER XII

EDGEHILL FIELD

ON a glorious autumn morning, a month after Belford Troop had reported at the headquarters of Lord General Essex, Myles Delaroche rode beside his captain to the top of a grassy hillock on Edgehill field. Thence he saw, spread out on either hand in order of battle, the whole armed power of the Parliament—thousands and thousands of swordsmen, pikemen and musketeers—solid squares of infantry and cavalry in quadruple lines, with the frowning guns and their pyramids of shot in the spaces between. As he gazed at the magnificent scene and realized that he was himself a part of it, the young officer's heart swelled with pride and gladness. "Surely," he thought, "this is a mighty army, and the victory we shall win this day will long be remembered."

On the far left wing, and beyond the road to Kington, stood rank on rank of heavy cavalry—best armed and trained of all the Parliament's forces and the chief dependence of the Puritan commander. Even at this distance their great broadswords were visible in the glancing sunlight, and one with keen young eyes could discern the officers posted at regular intervals

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in advance of the line and the aides who galloped back and forth between them. Here and there gleamed a helmet or hauberk of polished steel, and silken banners of orange and blue fluttered beauteously in the wind.

On both sides of the main body of foot soldiers, and between them and the cavalry, small groups of cannon had been placed; and the gunners now stood about among them with rammers and sponges in hand and with lighted matches ready. The King's artillery had been thundering for an hour, sending solid shot from the top of the steep hill a mile away and filling the air with a hollow roaring. A few men and horses had been struck, but most of the balls passed over the heads of the troops or plunged into the low ground in front of them. Essex had given strict orders that there was to be no reply. Most of his artillery was with Hampden's regiments which were still many miles to the rear, and even if all his guns had been on the field, he could hope for little from them if used against an enemy entrenched on the steep crest of Edgehill some hundreds of feet above. Besides, he hoped for a move on the King's part that would nullify this advantage. If the troops of the Parliament failed to attack the hill, it might be that Charles with his army would descend to meet them. Banbury, to the rear of Edgehill, was fortified for the Parliament. For lack of supplies, the King could not long maintain his present position. It would be folly to turn

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in retreat in the face of an advancing army; and Essex well knew that there were many of the King's officers besides Prince Rupert who would advise an opposite course. On these accounts the Puritan commander had determined to take up his stand just beyond effective cannon range from the hilltop and to wait for the royal army to move down to the plain.

The Parliamentary center was made up of a solid mass of foot soldiers, variously equipped and wholly without uniforms or any indication of the force to which they belonged save the orange scarfs on their arms. Nearly half of them carried long matchlock muskets with powder and bullet pouches and the forked iron rests which were meant to be driven into the ground before them for the bettering of their aim. Most of the others were armed with pikes or spears of tremendous length for the repelling of assaults after a volley had been delivered and while the musketeers were recharging their weapons. Some of the pikemen wore steel caps and breastplates, while the heads of others were covered with steeple-crowned felt hats and their bodies with coats of leather or of plain gray homespun. Their officers—for the most part stern and bearded men of middle age or more—walked or rode up and down before the ranks, exhorting in Scriptural phrase these raw recruits to stand firm for the right, or stood apart with hands outstretched and faces turned to the sky and prayed for victory.

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At the foot of the hill, behind the watchers, two small cavalry regiments under Sir William Balfour and Sir Philip Stapleton were drawn up in battle array. To the second of these the troop from Belford had been assigned; and Captain Boynton now cast frequent glances backward to note the alignment of the ranks, the alertness of the minor officers and the demeanor of the men so lately drawn from shop and farm.

Still farther back and at the extreme right wing, Lord Feilding's regiment of horse held a position to which Earl Essex had assigned it as being least exposed to danger. Lord Feilding had joined the Army of the Parliament but a week or so before. His men had but little training and some troops were not fully armed. The General had learned that fiery Prince Rupert would command the right wing of the King's army, and had concluded that the first and most powerful attack was to be expected from that quarter. Therefore he had placed his best troops on his left to meet Rupert's Cavaliers, and had sent Colonel Feilding to the extreme right with orders to take up a position a furlong or more behind the front line, there to hold his regiment in reserve, and in no event to advance without orders.

Soon after noon it became evident that the army of Charles would no longer await the attack on its chosen ground. The fire of the royal guns was redoubled, and now the artillerists had more accurately

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determined the range, and some of the balls tore through the Parliamentary ranks. Then, suddenly, the steep slopes of Edgehill were swarming with men and horses. With beating drums and waving flags, regiment after regiment of cavalry and infantry poured down the slopes, and in a quarter of an hour, had ranged themselves in battle formation on the plain and only half a mile away. Then indeed the Parliamentary cannon opened fire, and, while the royal guns were being lowered to the plain and brought to the line, inflicted some measure of injury. But they were too few and too unskillfully handled to produce great results, and soon the royal artillery was at work again. The first salvo was directed at the Parliamentary batteries, and served to demonstrate beyond question the skill of the German artillerists who served the King. When the cloud of smoke and dust that had momentarily hidden the Puritan cannon was dissipated Myles beheld a scene of carnage and destruction. Several of the guns had been broken or dismounted and more than half the cannoneers lay wounded or dead among them.

Just then the hillock upon which Myles and his captain had stationed themselves was approached by a small group of horsemen who rode at a gallop from the direction of the parliamentary center. Myles instantly recognized the Lord General and his staff, and both he and Captain Boynton saluted as the party came up the slope and made way for the General to occupy

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the most favorable post for observation of the field.

"My lord," said one of the older officers to the Earl as they drew their horses to a stand, "shall we not give the order to our cavalry to charge ere they can rightly establish themselves yonder? In that way we may gain a victory, while if we leave it much longer to the cannon, they will cut us to pieces."

The Lord General shook his head.

"There'll be charging enough anon," he said, "and our men, with their little training, are better fitted to stand fast and repel assaults than to make them. We have already gained the worth of ten thousand men in drawing our enemy from yonder hilltop. Let us wait a little longer and see what betides."

"See!" cried another officer, pointing with outstretched arm at the right of the royal army, "Prince Rupert makes ready to charge. Pray God our men *do* stand fast."

All shaded their eyes with their hands and gazed at at the forward-surging mass of enemy horsemen. The artillery fire had been so light on the Parliamentary side that but small and scattered clouds of smoke obscured the view, and between these the brisk October air was as clear as though a hard frost locked the earth. Now the distant line broke into a gallop and waving swordblades flashed in the sunshine. An intervening hedge and ditch were cleared by rank after rank of the riders in a manner that showed their familiarity with the hazards of the hunting field. Though

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most of the royal troopers were as new to actual war as those of the Parliament, it was clear that nearly every man among them was a skillful horseman and had thus already learned the half of the mounted soldier's trade. Essex groaned as he watched them. "Ah!" he said, "if our men could ride like that!"

"See!" cried the officer who had first noted Rupert's advance, "by all that's Holy! Fortescue rides to meet them."

Now a smoke cloud lifted, and this movement was clearly seen by all the watchers. A great body of the Parliamentary horse on the extreme left wing had driven forward straight toward the charging enemy. All of the little group on the hillock held their breaths and gazed as though spellbound. Myles set his teeth as he awaited the shock of the encounter and fiercely gripped the hilt of his weapon. The two bodies of horsemen were approaching one another at full gallop. In another instant would come the deadly collision. Then suddenly the Parliamentary line wavered and halted and their banners fluttered forward to the ground.

"Oh, the cowards!" shouted one. "Will they surrender with never a blow?"

But far worse than a surrender was to ensue. As the Cavalier line approached and seemed to coalesce with that of Fortescue's cavalry, those faithless troopers wheeled about and charged, sword in hand, straight back upon their comrades.

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"Treason!" groaned the General. "Oh! if Fortescue survives this day and we can e'er lay hands upon him, he shall hang higher than Haman."

To this there was no reply from the other officers, for at that moment the traitorous horsemen, with Rupert's Cavaliers on either hand, struck the main body of the Parliament's cavalry in the flank. A terrific *melée* ensued, with flashes from a thousand pistols intermixed with those from gleaming sword blades and the sight of men and horses falling everywhere.

Rupert's men fought with swords only, and, like armored knights of old, they left death in their track. Half of their opponents had pistols in their hands, which after the first blind volley were empty and useless, and all were bewildered and shaken by Fortescue's desertion. Scores and hundreds went down beneath the sword strokes, and only here and there a little group made determined stand. Almost from the first the Parliamentary ranks had been broken and the whole shattered array had given ground.

Then the horsemen in the rearmost ranks began to break away and flee. Soon the whole body was in flight toward the infantry with the Cavalier horsemen at their heels, hacking and hewing like demons. Perhaps the routed Parliamentarians hoped to find protection among the pikes of the infantry. If so, their thought was worse than vain for the whole tangled mass of pursuers and pursued poured over the regiments of foot as a mountain flood with a thousand

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tons of floating débris pours over a valley corn-field.

Instantly the slaughter grew ten times worse. Pikemen and musketeers were cut down by the royal swordsmen and trampled by the leaping and rearing horses of friends and foes alike. On plowed the tide of carnage till four whole regiments of infantry had been crushed and scattered like a mob of drunken rioters. Then, when the survivors of the beaten cavalry had somehow extricated themselves from the maelstrom, they spurred away across the fields and down the road toward Kineton with Rupert and all his men galloping madly in pursuit and mercilessly cutting down any whom they could overtake.

Now another body of horsemen left the royalist position and spurred with might and main along the left flank of the Parliament troops and disappeared in the wake of Rupert and his victims. These had come from the very center, and were the guards who had until then surrounded the royal banner. Myles wondered greatly at this, for the center and right of Essex's army was still intact; and these mad horsemen behaved as though their victory were already won and they feared to be behindhand in the seizure of spoil. In another moment, however, he forgot them, for the tide of war surged nearer to the hillock where the General and his aides had posted themselves; bullets in numbers that increased from moment to moment were whining past their heads, and still another

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body of royal cavalry appeared on their right and bore down toward them.

Captain Boynton and Lieutenant Delaroche quickly took up their positions at the head of Belford Troop; hurried orders were given, and the whole line stood ready to charge at the General's word.

Standing thus behind the hillock, the troopers were out of sight of the cavalry they had seen advancing; and for several minutes they tensely awaited their coming. Then they experienced a bewildering and terrifying surprise. The enemy had swept around a copse of trees far to the right and fallen furiously upon the Feilding regiment, forty rods behind them.

Again, and at much closer range, they beheld the awful scenes which had ensued upon Prince Rupert's charge. Some of the bolder spirits in Belford Troop could scarcely be restrained from leaving their post to go to the rescue of their comrades. Others turned white and giddy with the sight and could hardly sit upright in their saddles.

With bravery indeed, but with a pitiful lack of skill, Feilding's recruits withstood the attack for a time, using swords and pistols and even clubs and axes indiscriminately and desperately, losing all control of their horses in the *melée* and suffering terrific slaughter. Then the remnant broke and fled; and again the royal horsemen followed, hewing down the stragglers, surrounding desperate groups in ditches

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and fence corners and swiftly turning their victory into a massacre.

Meanwhile the Lord General had been sitting upon his horse on the hillock, surrounded by his bewildered advisers and viewing what seemed the total destruction of his army. Myles looked up from his post and saw the Earl with his face buried in his hands to shut out the sights that were driving him to madness. As the young lieutenant gazed at this piteous spectacle, his gorge rose within him, and for an instant he felt the deathly sickness of utter disgust and despair. Just then the Earl withdrew his hands from his eyes and sat erect.

"Gentlemen," he said in a voice of utter misery, "the day is lost. *All* is lost save the honor of Englishmen. Our army and the hope of our cause is destroyed. But we may yet save that which is dearer to us than life, though we lay our bones upon this field. Follow me."

Setting spurs to his horse, the Lord General galloped away toward the center where a number of infantry regiments still stood firm among a hail of bullets and answered the royalist fire with determined volleys. Snatching a pike from a soldier, he threw himself from his horse, then, followed by all his aides, ran forward to plant himself in the van.

That part of the line held by Belford Troop had thus far been partly sheltered from the royalist fire by the hillock directly in front; but now the enemy

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line was nearer; a serious cross-fire was developing, and more and more often bullets whistled over their heads or passed among them. Two of the soldiers and some of the horses were struck down, and the other men, to whom such harrowing sights were new, showed signs of dismay. Captain Boynton sternly closed the ranks and ordered every man to look straight before him. He had hardly uttered this command when a bullet struck him full in the face. Without a sound he threw up his hands and fell headlong from his saddle.

Half a dozen of the troopers cried out in horror at this catastrophe, and others crowded about to view the body of their fallen leader. In the rearmost rank two or three white-faced lads began backing their horses away.

The moment was terrible beyond words. The honor of Belford Troop and the integrity of the Parliamentary line wavered perilously in the balance. In another instant the company would have been flying, panic-stricken, from the field; but Myles Delaroche dashed toward the shrinking troopers, pistol in hand and with match alight and ready.

“To your places!” he shouted menacingly. “I am in command here, and I’ll shoot the first man who gives way.”

The frightened lads drew back to their places. Then with a few sharply spoken commands Lieutenant Delaroche realigned the ranks as upon the drill ground.

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Even the rawest of recruits recognizes the voice of competent command.

The men obeyed promptly and showed no further signs of thinking themselves without a leader. In a moment this regained morale proved of priceless worth, for Colonel Stapleton came galloping along the line and shouted:

"They're coming, boys. Make ready. Stand fast for God's sake. Who's in command here?"

"I am, sir," answered Myles with a salute.

"You? Is Boynton down? Oh! where are these mens' pistols?" shouted the colonel, distractedly, "and they have not their matches lighted!"

"No, sir," replied Myles steadily. "These men are not well trained to the pistol. They fight much better with the sword."

"Aye, Colonel, and so do mine," came a deep voice from just behind them. "I have given them orders to use the sword only."

Myles wheeled about and saw a powerfully built man of middle age, mounted upon an iron-gray horse and bearing upon hat and sleeve the indications of a captain's rank. Even in that moment of imminent peril, the stranger's stern and rock-jawed countenance and piercing gray eyes made an indelible impression on his mind. But Colonel Stapleton was replying, hesitatingly:

"Say you so, Captain Cromwell? Your words, I know, are likely to be well thought upon; but do not

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some of the best authorities believe the pistol to be the more deadly?"

"Aye, that they may do, but even before our eyes this day we have twice seen cavalry that used it driven in rout by swordsmen."

"Right! You are right indeed," answered the colonel decisively. "Go ride down the line, Captain, I pray you, and deliver my word to all the other troop commanders that they have their men sheath their pistols and prepare to fight as we have seen these bloody and malignant ones to-day—with swords and swords only. And make haste for our turn will quickly come."

Without more words, Captain Cromwell wheeled his horse about and spurred away down the line. The colonel rode in the other direction, and Myles turned back to his troop. The ranks were perfectly ordered, and a firmer spirit was plainly visible on the faces of the men.

Just then a line of enemy infantry appeared only three hundred yards away and stretching far across the field on left and right. On the rising ground behind it came rank after rank of musketeers and pikemen. The whole royal army was charging down on the regiments that still maintained the Parliamentary line. Both wings of the Puritan army were broken and scattered. If now the center gave way, nothing could prevent a hideous rout and the utter ruin of the Parliament's cause.

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But the regiments of Stapleton and Balfour were not to stand awaiting the fate that had befallen the other bodies of Parliamentary cavalry. Colonel Stapleton now reappeared in front of Belford Troop. Waving his sword about his head, he shouted madly:

“Charge, and God be with us.”

Then he whirled about and rode straight toward the advancing line of pikes and muskets. Lieutenant Delaroche repeated his colonel's order, then spurred forward, sword in hand, and only two paces behind him. At the same instant the whole line of horsemen went forward with an ear-splitting battle yell that seemed to proceed from one gigantic throat.

Bullets tore through the ranks and emptied many a saddle. Horses went down and threw their riders among the trampling hoofs of the ranks that followed. Yet the line went forward with a roar, and in a moment dashed itself upon the oncoming battalions. Men and horses impaled themselves upon the points of pikes stubbornly held with their hafts to the ground. Men were shot with muskets the muzzles of which were pressed against their bodies or dashed from their saddles by whirling gun butts. The charge was almost halted by the very mass of bodies it encountered. But the infantry line was utterly broken and hundreds went down under the heavy swords of the horsemen and the iron-shod hoofs of their steeds. Myles was fighting side by side with his colonel; and the two skilled swordsmen hewed a wide path forward. The

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men of Belford, all their terrors forgotten, fought like veterans of a hundred fields.

All around them were scenes of carnage like those they had twice before that day beheld at a distance. But now it was their own line that pressed forward and their enemies who fell before their weapons. Straight through the lines they plowed, leaving behind only scattered fighting groups or terrified individuals who threw down their arms and begged for mercy.

On their left, Balfour with his troopers was duplicating their triumphs. Still farther, the Puritan infantry regiments were standing firm against the royalist onslaught. Myles, whose heart had been as lead with the slaughter and defeat he had seen from the hilltop, now began to breathe the breath of victory. They had completely pierced the royal center; and Balfour had charged the artillery, killed or scattered the gunners and seized the cannon.

All the thoughts of Myles Delaroche had been a tumult and a madness; but now in a moment's pause a sudden memory came to him, followed at once by a dazzling vision of victory snatched from defeat. Frantically clutching the arm of his colonel, he shouted in his ear:

"They have no horsemen left. All have ridden away after our men whom they defeated. We can circle about and take their other foot regiments in the rear."

Stapleton sat erect and shouted orders to Cromwell



HERE THE SLAUGHTER WAS THE WORST OF THE ENTIRE DAY.

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and the other captains who were approaching from either hand. In a moment's time the regiment was galloping forward again. After riding a hundred yards toward the hill, they turned to the left and swept around upon the rear of the regiments which were attacking the Parliamentary center. Balfour's men saw the movement and could not be restrained from joining it. Abandoning the captured guns, they galloped at the side of their comrades and the two regiments crashed at once upon the rear of the royalist army.

Here the slaughter was the worst of the entire day, for the foot soldiers were taken unprepared and could not quickly enough face about to meet this new menace. The royal standard was in this part of the field, though King Charles had been induced to retire to the hilltop when the battle became general. Balfour's horsemen hewed their way toward the flag, and soon had cut down its brave defender and seized the ensign.

Nothing, it would seem, could save the King's army from defeat and annihilation. Some of his regiments had been cut to pieces and others had fled from the field. Only two regiments remained intact; and Balfour and Stapleton were reforming their ranks to charge upon these, when some one observed the return of Rupert's cavalry which had galloped back from Kineton on hearing of the breaking of the royal line.

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Essex was now again on horseback, and, repenting his desperate folly of an hour before, had resumed control of his army. Wilmot, who commanded the King's horsemen who had destroyed Feilding's regiment, now returned also; and these accessions to the royalist forces made it unlikely that further assaults would be successful.

It was already twilight, and the energies of the fighters on both sides were exhausted. So messengers were sent by the commander to the scattered Parliamentary forces ordering them to reoccupy the positions they had held in the morning. When night fell they were sullenly facing their enemies upon a field where the deeds of a few hundred determined men had made a drawn battle of that which had seemed an irretrievable defeat.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CAVALIER CAPTAIN

THE sun was just rising over the frost-covered moor to the east of a lonely Shropshire road and gilding the summits of the rocks on the pastured hills that rose abruptly on the other side, when a little group of horsemen drew rein at a wayside spring where they were sheltered by a thick-growing clump of yew and hazel. While the weary horses drank or grazed, the men busied themselves with adjusting girths or saddle rolls, renewed the priming of their pistols or conversed with one another in low and cautious tones.

Meanwhile their leader, Captain Delaroche of Stapleton's Horse, flung himself from his saddle and approached a pair of troopers both of whom bestrode the same mount, a big roan gelding that now drank eagerly from the little stream. He who rode behind the saddle had a livid bruise across his forehead; he was pale and faint from weariness, and had evident need to embrace his comrade's body to save himself from falling.

"How fares it with you, Sergeant?" asked the captain, speaking in a low voice though in a warm and heartening tone.

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The trooper made a wry face as he replied :

“Why, Captain! it could hardly be worse. My leg is surely broken. And what with the pain of it and the doubt of our winning through, I could wish most heartily it had been my neck instead.”

“Oh, fie!” answered the captain in a tone one might use to an ailing child, “we’ll have you safely at Stockton Grange in an hour’s time. And there is old Surgeon Pound to set your leg and a good bed to lie on while it mends. Before midsummer you’ll ride with Belford Troop once more.”

Another spasm of pain crossed the soldier’s countenance, and he closed his eyes wearily.

“Perhaps ’twill be so, captain,” he replied. “But there’s many a long day before then; and now your care of me in this wise holds back our party sorely. Had it not been for that rolling stone in the ford and my horse’s falling and catching my leg beneath him we would ere this have been at Stockton. It was no part of your plan or of worthy Colonel Stapleton’s that we should ride thus in broad daylight where every copse might hold a company of Rupert’s men. ’Twere better even now that you put me down here by the brook, for the first passer-by to relieve as he might, and be not hampered in your further riding.”

“Nay, Sergeant,” said the captain earnestly. “The first passers might well be some of the King’s men who’d put a bullet through you sooner than cumber themselves. Think not of our leaving you in any such

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helpless state. I say again we'll come to Stockton in an hour, and your misfortune shall be mended in so far as surgeon's skill may serve. What ho, lads! Let us ride."

Springing to his saddle, the young leader reined his horse into the trodden way and rode away at a canter. His men quickly followed his example, and, riding in double file, made their way southward across the moor toward the place some two or three miles distant where the road turned toward the hills and entered a dense oak wood. One of their number was a native of this countryside, and he assured the captain that from the first hill they would surmount after emerging from the wood the roofs of Stockton Grange could plainly be seen.

It was a year and more since the bloody and indecisive struggle at Edgehill. The tide of war had surged to and fro, with the soldiers of both parties eagerly hoping for final victory from each clash at arms. The Puritans had been worsted at Adwalton Moor, where Myles had been severely wounded, and again at Roundway Down, while he lay in the hospital. At Newbury the stubborn fighting of the London train bands amongst the walls and hedges had turned what seemed a defeat to a partial victory. On the whole the fortunes of the Parliament were steadily waning. The King controlled more territory than had acknowledged his authority a year before, and he had prospects, more or less definite, of armed assistance

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from France, from Denmark and from Ireland. The Puritan forces had no leader who could command at once the authority of Parliament and the enthusiastic loyalty of the soldiers. Lord General Essex, though the soul of honor and courage, was of a mind too doubtful and hesitating for a great commander; and it was widely believed in London and at the camp that he had twice or thrice lost opportunities for blows that might have proven decisive.

Colonel Oliver Cromwell, with some companies of dour-faced Puritans from Lincolnshire, who rode and fought as earnestly as they preached and prayed, and some of ragamuffin adventurers from nobody knows where, who would sing a psalm, dance a jig or cut a throat with equal readiness, was seizing and destroying a succession of royalist strongholds in the Midlands. Elsewhere the outlook was gloomy. Discouragement was rife in London and in the army of Essex, and treason itself had not been lacking. Some members of Parliament deserted Westminster and joined the King at Oxford. Sir Hugh Cholmley, Governor of Scarborough, schemed for the delivery of his charge to the royal agents; and even the determined loyalty of his second in command and the greater part of the garrison could not save the fortress. Old Sir John Hotham who, in the spring of 1642, had been the first to bid defiance to the King by refusing him admittance to the city of Hull, had, but a year or so later, plotted with his son, a captain

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in the Parliamentary army, to yield up to the royalists both Hull and Lincoln. The intended treachery had been discovered and the conspirators arrested barely in time to prevent the utter ruin of the Parliamentary cause.

As the winter set in, Colonel Stapleton, with six troops of horse, went into camp at Dudley, with orders from General Essex to make secure for the Parliament's cause and the collection of the new taxes as large a portion as he might of the surrounding country. In pursuit of this object, Captain Delaroche with ten of the members of Belford Troop had been despatched to reinforce the small garrison at Stockton Grange, some forty miles to the westward. They were to ride by night, since they traversed a region occupied by irregular bodies of Cavalier troops and dotted by castles and manor houses, most of which were held in the name of the King. Their effort to reach Stockton before dawn had been defeated by the accident to Sergeant Busby at the Cattle Ford which marked the half of their journey; and now the rising sun found them still ten miles and more from the Grange.

A low mist hung over the plain and favored the advance of horsemen who wished to remain unseen. As they left the moor, however, and turning to the right, mounted the steep road toward the wood, they found themselves in clearer air, and could not doubt that their party would be plainly visible to any watchers

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within half a mile. With this in mind, Myles, accompanied by only one of the troopers, rode well ahead to reconnoiter the wood's edge and the road that ran straight through it and over the hilltop beyond.

Fortune seemed to favor their enterprises, for not only was all quiet at the point where the road entered the forest, but the path was clear before them for nearly a mile beyond. Neither man nor beast was to be seen between them and the arch of glorious blue sky where the road emerged upon the pastured hillside.

Turning in his saddle, Myles beckoned eagerly to his followers, then spurred forward at a trot. Soon they had overtaken him, and the whole party rode at a canter up the slope and toward the open ground. Then grim disaster assailed and overwhelmed them. They suddenly became aware of another road that crossed their way at right angles a furlong within the wood. At the same instant they caught sight of a body of horsemen thrice as numerous as their own that rode straight toward them upon this cross road and that wore the broad, plumed hats and varicolored doublets and hose of the Cavaliers.

For a breathless moment both parties hesitated; then, with a yell of hate and triumph, the royalist horsemen charged. There was no time for retreat or for the counting of chances. In an instant came the fierce *melée*, with the flash and roar of pistols, the

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steely clang of swords and the shouts and groans of victor and vanquished.

Myles Delaroche, in desperate endeavor to save his party from destruction, fought as he had never fought before. Standing erect in his stirrups, he slashed and thrust like a Crusader knight on the plains of Jerusalem, his terrible blade hewing a space before him whichever way he turned. But his men were from the first outnumbered and overborne. Poor Busby and his comrade on the roan gelding had fallen at the first onslaught; and scarce two minutes had passed ere all the others were thrust or beaten down or in full flight along the way they had come. Down the rocky pathway they galloped furiously, each luckless fugitive closely pursued by half a dozen yelling and cursing enemies.

Captain Delaroche alone held his ground. There had been no demand for surrender and no word of quarter, and his only thought was to sell his life as dearly as he might. He was still unwounded, but was now surrounded by three of the Cavalier troopers who savagely cut and slashed at him from all directions at once. So beset, Myles had no instant's time for attack, but must strain every nerve to guard his breast and throat; and he well knew that such a battle could have but one ending. A moment more and he would fall beneath a shower of blows.

Then, above the clash of swordblades, he heard the sound of galloping hoofs and a voice that shouted

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unintelligible commands. The next instant the horses of two of his assailants were thrown aside by the rush of a great white charger, and he found himself face to face with a Cavalier officer. The newcomer waved a heavy sword in one hand and swung the other arm about his head like a boxer warding an expected blow, and all the while kept shouting unheard words.

Without an instant's stay, Myles attacked this new enemy. A sweeping feint at the plume-crowned head was transformed to a stab like that of a lightning bolt, straight toward his adversary's throat—a pass that he had striven for years to perfect and that had served him well at need. But the blow was expertly warded, and Myles knew at once from the firmness of the parry that he was facing a swordsman who, even without aid from the others, would prove a most dangerous antagonist. Strangely enough, the thrust was not returned in the critical instant following its delivery while Myles leaned perilously forward. Neither were any further blows directed at the Puritan captain by the Cavalier horseman on the other side. Myles had recovered his guard and was seeking an opening for another attack when, to his utter amazement, he heard his own name among his opponent's shouted words:

“Myles! Myles Delaroche! Don't you know me? It's Hinsdale. Surrender now. Surrender to me that I may save your life.”

In bewilderment, Myles dropped the point of his sword and peered into the face of the man before him.

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His age seemed at least eight-and-twenty, for his lips and chin were hidden by the upturned mustachios and the small pointed beard that many of the Cavaliers affected in compliment to the King; and he wore the insignia of a captain in the royal cavalry. But he was, nevertheless, no other than the youth whom Myles had beaten at the foils at the Académie de la Rapière and who had been his gay and carefree companion through well remembered days.

"Zounds!" he cried, between his gasps for breath. "I knew you but in the nick of time. Another minute and my men would have thrust you through, e'en though you fight like the Devil himself. My faith! but 'tis lucky I could make you prisoner."

"It is, indeed, Captain Hinsdale," said Myles, as he tendered his sword, hilt foremost, to his captor, "and I must humbly thank you for saving my life at some risk of your own—for, truly, I tried hard enough to pierce your throat when you came before me, and before I knew your design."

"Say no more of it, Myles, I beg of you," smiled Arthur. "Another day the fortune may be reversed, for such are the chances of this war of ambush and skirmishing we're engaged upon."

"But now that I am your prisoner," returned Myles, "how mean you to dispose of me?"

"Why, that will not be hard, indeed. Hinsdale Hall is scarce five miles from here, as perhaps you know. My father holds the place for the King, and I, during

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the winter months, make part of its garrison. We'll ride thither, if you please."

Myles bowed gravely, and, unstrapping his pistol holster, handed it to the soldier who had been the third among his assailants. With three long-drawn blasts of a whistle, Captain Hinsdale summoned his scattered troopers. A detail was left to bury the dead and another to bear in the wounded. Then, at a rapid trot, the detachment moved toward Hinsdale Hall with the comrades whom war had parted riding side by side in the lead.

CHAPTER XIV.

HINSDALE HALL

HINSDALE HALL was a beautiful old residence of stone and tile, half castle and half manor house. Located on a gentle eminence in the midst of noble parks and groves, it commanded a view on the one side of forested hills and a willow-bordered stream and on the other of the roofs and whitewashed walls of Hinsdale Village, a quarter of a mile away, and the ivy covered tower of the parish church.

Throwing himself from his horse in the courtyard, Captain Hinsdale led the way up the brick-paved pathway toward the great doors. The troopers took charge of their mounts and led them toward the ample stables in the rear where a score or more of soldiers in varied Cavalier costumes lolled in the sunshine or played at dice and hazard. Myles followed his captor unquestioningly through the entrance lobby to the broad, low-arched hall within. There, in the half light, after the brilliant morning sunshine, he stood for a moment like an awkward schoolboy, blinking in surprise at what he saw.

The round oaken table in the center, glorious with

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snowy napery and burnished silver furnishing, was laden with a bounteous repast, awaiting the downsitting of the master and his guests. Ranged before the fireplace, with its cheery blaze of beechwood logs, were Sir William and Mistress Hinsdale and several other persons whose faces Myles at first could but dimly discern. The first was a tall and stately old man in the garb of a clergyman of the Church of England, the second a stout and rubicund gentleman in the costume of the Court, and the third a slender young lady of seventeen with dark, abundant hair and round, black eyes.

Arthur stood aside as if to permit Myles to advance, and the young Puritan captain recognized his redoubtable uncle, James Dalrymple of Surrey Lane. And beyond a doubt the young lady at his side was little Lucy whom he had last seen three years before in the half darkness of the London lane when she had so persistently endeavored to leave with him her little purse of guineas.

Stiffly, Myles bowed before his kinspeople and to Mistress Hinsdale and her husband. In his mind was utter confusion. He had no idea whether his status in this house was to be that of a hated enemy and prisoner or that of an old-time friend. Arthur's manner on the ride thither had been cordial; but, contrary to his wont of old, he had said but little, and Myles had been following his usual plan when placed in situations new to him—that of using his eyes and

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ears far more than his voice. Sir William and Mistress Hinsdale awaited an explanation. Uncle James and Lucy stared back at Myles without a word, their manner plainly showing that their astonishment at this encounter was no whit less than his own.

Arthur was the first to break the silence. With a hearty and ringing laugh that was quite in his olden manner, he cried:

“Zounds! Good Master Dalrymple, your eyes stand out as though you saw a ghost. This is no other than your beloved nephew, now Captain Delaroche of Stapleton’s Horse. Is he not after all a fine upstanding soldier—one of whom all his family may be proud?”

“And what does he here, Captain Arthur?” asked the Registrar, thickly. “Has he come to offer his submission to the officers of the King?”

“I rather think not,” was the reply in a somewhat more serious tone. “Captain Delaroche is the last of a small party of Parliamentary Horse whom my patrol came suddenly upon this morning in Dugdale Wood. I came up but just in time to see the last of it and, with the aid of some troopers that surrounded him, to make a prisoner of our enemy-friend. He has yielded up his weapons to be sure; and I fear must be our guest for the time, regardless of any other engagements he may have made; but from what I heard and saw of his sword play, I judge that he has no pres-

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ent thought of abandoning the Roundhead cause and seeking the King's pardon."

"Captain Hinsdale thinks rightly," said Myles gravely, directing his words by turns to James Dalrymple, to Lucy and to Sir William Hinsdale. "It has been my misfortune to have my detachment overwhelmed and destroyed and myself to have been made prisoner of war; but while I live I am loyal to the Parliament, and seek from the King neither pardon nor any other favors."

"By my faith, then!" seethed Dalrymple, his cheeks and ears growing as red as the wattles of a turkey cock, "you are no nephew of mine, and naught but a cursed Roundhead. And if Captain Arthur brings you here as one fit to sit at meat with ladies and gentlemen who are loyal to Church and King, I must, begging his pardon, decline to agree with him. If such is to be your status here, I say, my daughter and I must withdraw from the house."

With high-held chin and flaming eyes the King's Registrar gazed angrily at the recalcitrant youth, then turned and confronted Captain Arthur and Sir William Hinsdale. Mistress Hinsdale uttered some gentle words with peace-making intent; but these were hardly heard, for the whole company now turned toward Mistress Lucy who had seized her father by the arm and forcibly turned him about to face her.

"Oh, fie, Father!" she cried. "What nonsense is this you are talking? Is Myles any less a man and



J. G. Williams.

"YOU ARE NO NEPHEW OF MINE, AND NAUGHT BUT A CURSED
ROUNDHEAD."

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our good cousin because he sees not the right of this quarrel as we do?"

"Aye, that he is," sputtered the registrar, "less, much less."

"Then is Lord Essex or Lord Manchester, that fight under the Parliament, unfit to treat with gentlemen that bear the King's proposals? Methinks I've heard you say somewhat far different, and that not long since."

"Why, Master Dalrymple," interposed Sir William, "Captain Delaroche is an old friend of my son's. We've often heard of him from Arthur and from others, and never to his discredit, I assure you. 'Tis a thousand pities he's on the wrong side; but let us who serve the King do somewhat to convince those who oppose us that we are not knaves and tyrants. I welcome Captain Delaroche to Hinsdale; and I trust that in so doing I shall not be turning away an old friend like yourself."

Lucy now took her father by the arm and led him determinedly to a far corner of the room. There she spoke with him in low but earnest tones for a minute or two while Sir William and Mistress Hinsdale and Captain Arthur gathered about the prisoner and asked him most courteously of his recent fortunes and whether any of those who had been slain in the morning's skirmish were close friends or relatives. The clergyman was introduced as the Reverend Peter Lounsedale, rector of a parish in Lincolnshire from

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which he had been driven by the soldiers of the Parliament. Presently James Dalrymple approached them, walking with much dignity arm in arm with his daughter, and uttered his solemn decision:

"I will remain and countenance this proceeding on one condition only. Master Delaroche has been spoken of as a captain of horse, as though, forsooth, he bore the King's commission. Now whatever pretended rank he may hold among those rebels and bandits that make war on Church and King, he is, as we all know, no captain at all, for that he holds no commission from our anointed sovereign. I will never recognize any rank that is otherwise bestowed, and I ask that all of you likewise refrain."

Captain Arthur smiled broadly, as he turned to his prisoner. "What say you, *Master Delaroche*? Are such conditions endurable?"

"Quite," returned Myles with an answering smile.

"Very well, then," said Arthur. "You are Master Delaroche while you remain at Hinsdale. And now that we are on this subject of your status here, will you give me your word to make no attempt to escape while under our charge? If so, I know we need not restrain you, and Fortune favoring us, we may pass some comfortable days for old time's sake."

"That word I give," answered Myles gravely.

"Then come with me where we may come at basins and towels, and we will make us outwardly fit to join

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the ladies at the breakfast table. 'Tis after nine, and I warrant that all of us are famished quite."

Soon the whole party was gathered about the ample board, and after a brief grace had been said by the clergyman, the meal proceeded as though they met in perfect amity. James Dalrymple was somewhat stiff in his demeanor, and pointedly avoided addressing his nephew. Lucy was not so reserved, and she and Arthur would have drawn Myles into gay talk of old times in London town had it not been that his replies, though never lacking in courtesy, betrayed a somewhat distrait and absent mind. In truth, he could not easily forget the struggle of the morning and the fate of the men who had made up his little command. Such chance encounters were common enough in the petty warfare of siege, ambush and onfall which intervened between the greater campaigns, and he could not blame himself for the disaster which had ensued. But, nevertheless, some stigma attached to an officer who saved his own life when those of his followers were lost; and it seemed most likely that no member of his detachment was left alive to tell the tale of the fight in Dugdale Wood. With his mind full of such thoughts as these, he ate but little, and was glad when the meal was ended.

Through the remainder of the morning Arthur and Sir William were busied with duties connected with the garrison, Mistress Hinsdale, with James Dalrymple and Lucy, had ridden forth to take the air, and

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Myles was left, sitting before the fire place with Rector Lounsdale, discussing at intervals the issues of the war as they related to church establishment. Myles was ever a good listener, and for years he had been not only willing but eager to hear both sides of the great questions of the day. Therefore he now encouraged the clergyman to expound at length the doctrine of the divine commission of the King to act as the unquestioned ruler of both Church and State. For two or three hours this one-sided debate proceeded, the Rector marching up and down as in the pulpit, declaiming at the top of his voice and hammering the palm of his left hand with his doubled right fist, and Myles answering only occasionally and by nods and smiles those portions of the discourse which consisted of obvious truths which no sensible man would dispute.

At length the good churchman, hearing so little in the way of reply, began to flatter himself on the progress he was making in bringing to the true belief this representative of a deluded and impious band. Just then Sir William and the others returned and the servants came in to arrange the table for the midday meal. As the divine was demonstrating with a multitude of texts the unassailable authority for his contention, the room became filled with the other members of the household, and Myles was saved from making further reply by the call of Mistress Hinsdale for their assemblage about the board.

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In the afternoon Master Dalrymple retired for the daily nap with which for many years nothing short of royal commands had been allowed to interfere, and Myles passed an hour or more upon the settle in the library, seated between Lucy Dalrymple and Arthur Hinsdale and exchanging with them tales of varied experience since they had last met.

Mistress Hinsdale was at her needlework in a great arm chair close by, and often intervened with low-voiced comment or addition. Arthur had served under Prince Rupert almost from the first, and he was firm in the belief that no other cavalry officer alive was the equal of his commander.

"Had you such a leader," he cried, hotly, "you might have made the war far more difficult for us than it has been. As it is, your cause is hopeless, for although you lack not men, and good men too, you have no general fit to hold the stirrup of our glorious Prince. He has never yet been stayed, and, on my faith, he never will be."

"Nay," replied Myles, "and just because of that, we came right near to destroying your army at Edgemoor, and mayhap once or twice since then. It may be as much the mark of a general to know when to draw bridle as when to loose it."

"I know whom you have in mind," retorted Arthur. "You're thinking of that solemn hypocrite, Noll Cromwell of Huntingdon. I'll own he has more pith in him than most of your officers, and that a kind of for-

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tune attends him. But his day will not be long. I have heard Prince Rupert himself inquire of him and where he is posted. In the next pitched battle, if your people can summon an army to offer one in the spring, the Prince will see to it that his own command is placed well opposite Cromwell's. Then if your doughty brewer stand his ground, as he has made his boasts he will, he's like to leave his bones there indeed, for the Prince has so ordered it that he shall never leave the field alive."

"It may be so," answered Myles. "Yet perhaps even Prince Rupert cannot order all things to his liking. And to me Oliver Cromwell seems no hypocrite or pretender—but one so aflame with zeal for the cause as to have lost all thought of ease or safety either for himself or others. I verily believe he would hand over his own son to the hangman if he thought him guilty of treason to the Parliament. But enough of the things on which we shall never agree. Lucy, how do you come to be in the West? And, with your father absent, who cares for the London house?"

Lucy's face became set and her black eyes flashed with angry memories as she replied:

"Why, 'tis in the hands of those precious friends of yours, the Roundheads of the City, if indeed some mob has not burned it to the ground ere this. My father has been hustled, insulted and robbed by your partisans, Myles, till 'tis no wonder he can scarcely be civil to a Roundhead under any circumstance.

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First his office was taken from him, the vulgar fellows saying there was no more need for such a service than of a barber for the Queen's lap dog. Then came the demands for gifts that we must make for the Parliament's cause—not taxes, forsooth, since the Parliament claimed not the authority to levy them, but *gifts* that we must bestow or have our house burned over our heads. Under this compulsion my father gave and gave until he saw 'twould ruin him quite. Then we got together what remained of gold and jewels and took flight in a thick foggy time for Oxford. After a week or so of riding about on the wretchedest of horses and of bribing your precious sentinels, we somehow arrived at Oxford. After paying our duty to the King, we came here on his suggestion. My father is an old man, Myles, and you yourself will own he has been hardly used. Think not too hardly of him then if he can not be civil to any that wear the Parliament's colors."

Myles bowed and muttered a hasty assent. He had not cherished resentment against his uncle for more than a day or two after their quarrel three years before, and now, in view of the old Royalist's misfortunes, he was willing to forgive even the rough reception of that morning. Lucy clearly had no enmity toward him, whatever she might feel for the partisans of the Parliament in general. Myles felt that it was his place to aid them if he might, remembering his uncle's eager, though mistaken activity in his behalf

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and his genuine good will through many months, rather than the angry tirades in which he indulged when the dearest convictions of his life were condemned and flouted. But how to say these things, or whether for the time they were best left unsaid, Myles could not at the moment decide, and he stammered and colored violently.

Arthur, with his usual ready perception and resource, acted to dispel an awkward situation by asking Lucy to play for them on the harpsichord. Mistress Hinsdale added her urgings, and Lucy, perhaps not unwilling to display her accomplishment before her old-time playmate, was soon seated at the instrument.

After one or two rather brilliant numbers, in listening to which Myles found more wonder at the performer's dexterity than delight in the music, Lucy began to sing, with her own accompaniment, some of the Elizabethan poems and ballads which, in a musical setting, were just then coming into popular favor. She had a sweetly tuned soprano, and, with the stimulus of appreciative listeners, rendered these simple and beautiful songs in a way no master could have taught her. For an hour the concert went on, and one by one Sir William, Rector Lounsdale and Lucy's father joined the group in the library. At last they found themselves joining in the refrain of a sweet old song of the countryside that all had known from childhood; and, at the Rectors' suggestion, this was



LUCY CLEARLY HAD NO ENMITY TOWARD HIM, WHATEVER SHE MIGHT
FEEL FOR THE PARTISANS OF THE PARLIAMENT IN GENERAL.

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followed by one of those beautiful and stately hymns that have come down through the centuries.

Song followed song, and it seemed as if all hostilities and misunderstandings should melt into the air and float away in the mutual refrain. Side by side in this happy company, and with heads bent over the same music book, stood the two youths who within twelve hours had been the leaders of hostile companies, engaged in a bloody and desperate fray.

CHAPTER XV

A PURITAN UTOPIA

THE next day a heavy snow was falling, and all of the household at Hinsdale remained indoors. Myles was wearing a suit of purple velvet and brocade which Arthur had loaned him to take the place of his own more sober colored garments which indeed were somewhat rent and worn and in several places splashed with blood. Games and music and light-hearted talk filled the morning hours, and the whole party sat for long over the roasted beef and the cakes and venison pies of the midday meal.

Arthur had poured himself a third glass of wine and was hospitably pressing his prisoner-guest to follow his example when his mother and Lucy rose and withdrew to armchairs near the fire and Sir William bade the servants make haste in clearing the table. Myles gladly enough omitted his excuses to Arthur, and, inferring from the baronet's serious demeanor that he had something of importance to say, took a seat beside the clergyman to await his announcement.

As soon as the dishes were removed and the doors

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that led toward the rear of the house were closed, Sir William began speaking.

“Good friends,” he said, in a low voice, though with all necessary distinctness, “my son and I have something to propose which has some appearance of ill discipline—so much so indeed that if we carry through our plan and it becomes known at Oxford, any there who chance to bear us ill-will might use it against us with the King or his advisers. We are convinced, however, that in this we are acting in honor and not at all to the disservice of our sovereign; and of that you yourselves shall be judges. In any event, I must ask that all of you keep secret what I now say, both to aid in its accomplishment and to avoid any misinterpretations in the future.”

“Sir William,” asked Myles gravely, “is it fitting that I who am not of your party should hear these plans?”

“Indeed it is, Master Delaroche,” responded the baronet, heartily, “for they concern you more directly than any one else. It is for your safety we are planning.”

“But I am already a prisoner.”

“Yes, a prisoner, and if we let things take their course, there is no knowing what your fate may be. Your rebellion is everywhere breaking down; the King and some of his advisers less merciful than himself will soon have power of life and death in all parts of England. And we have learned that your name is among

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those marked for rigorous prosecution. If we duly hand you over to our superiors, we may in fact be delivering you to the gallows."

Myles made no reply, and for a moment no one spoke. Then Sir William turned and addressed the others:

"In brief, my friends, here is what we propose: Master Delaroche is the only survivor of his party: our fellows have told us that every one of the others was slain either in the fight itself or in the pursuit that followed. No doubt it will be thought at Stapleton's camp that their leader perished also. Now we have a good and loyal friend in the captain of a certain ship that plies out of an English port not a hundred miles from here. Three days hence he weighs anchor for Virginia; and our plan is that he take as passenger a certain youth who, although he has been much misled, surely deserves better of us and of England herself than the ax or the hangman's noose."

James Dalrymple was first to reply.

"Why can he not duly make submission?" he queried. "Sir Hugh Cholmley has done so and many another. We surely have favor enough among us to secure his pardon. Then can he remain securely in England."

Sir William turned to Myles for a reply.

"As to that I can give no other answer than that I gave yesterday," said Myles slowly. "I will never make submission nor ask pardon of the King."

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Sir William smiled, then went on quickly:

"We had thought your resolution was fixed in that respect. And indeed such a course agrees but ill with a soldier's stomach, and it would make it hard to meet your comrades in arms in after days. But what we propose is far different. In Virginia they have other battles to fight than those concerning Parliament and King's prerogative. There are whole empires to conquer and a new people springing up. A stout and ready man may easily win a fortune. What say you, Master Delaroche? Can we thus serve you?"

Myles slowly shook his head. "I will never desert the Parliament's cause," he said, stubbornly, "nor ask the pardon of its enemies."

"Oh, Myles!" interposed Arthur, impatiently. "Be reasonable, cannot you? You have no call to play the martyr to a cause that's already lost. There's no one asks of you that you seek pardon. 'Tis merely your word that you'll not again bear arms against the King. Then we find you a good horse and a word or two to satisfy the sentinels, and set you on the way. Once in America, you are your own master."

Myles was silent for a space, and looked at the floor between his feet. No one else ventured to speak, and the room grew so still that the fall of a half-charred billet in the grate seemed like the crash of some huge body. At last the young soldier raised his head and said:

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"I cannot give my word not to bear arms against the King. I am enlisted in this cause, and will see it to the end. You may be right in saying the force of the Parliament is already broken, but if so, I will be one of those who will still cherish the rightness of its cause and make the worst extremes too dangerous for any government. I know well you seek to serve me, and this at no small risk to yourselves. Believe me, I am grateful for it—perhaps more so than if I accepted your offers. The fortune of war may some day make it possible for me to show this, not in words only but in deeds."

Sir William sighed deeply and turned away. Lucy and Mistress Hinsdale and Arthur took up the argument by turns, but without at all affecting the prisoner's resolution. Myles could only reiterate his determination: it seemed he could not summon logical reasons. At last Sir William again addressed him. There was impatience in his tone and in the way he paced shortly up and down before Myles' chair; yet his brusque manner and roughened voice did not serve altogether to hide a reluctant admiration.

"Master Delaroche" he said, "of what can such men as you be dreaming when you lift the banner of revolt against your lawful sovereign?"

"Of a better order for England," was the instant reply.

"A better order, forsooth! How can you hope for

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a better order if you break down the King's authority which is the source of all order?"

"The King's authority proceeds from the people. He has been intrusted by them with powers of government—and not for his honor and profit but for those of the commonwealth. If he use these powers tyrannically or foolishly they may be taken from him by those who bestowed them."

"And what will you do with the King," demanded James Dalrymple, "if by any unheard of fortune of arms your ragamuffins should prevail? Will ye make him prisoner and cut off his head?"

"Make him prisoner, yes," answered Myles, steadily, "but as for executing him by any means—I hope most heartily 'twill not come to that, although I must own I have heard some of the wilder sectaries propose it. 'Twould be needless in any event, and might in the end raise up for us more enemies than friends."

"But you would strike the crown from his head and confine him to some castle or prison?"

"Yes, we could hardly do otherwise. So long as he were free to move about and plot and plan with royalists here and abroad there'd be no safety for the new government."

"Of what would this new government consist?" asked Sir William.

"Of a Parliament elected by the votes of every man in the country, and of the agents and officers that they would appoint."

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"Every man?" echoed the baronet. "Do you mean that every Jack and Harry in the Kingdom should have a vote for Parliament members?"

"Aye, that's what I mean, indeed, and not only a vote but an *equal* vote."

"With Old Bill the Ratcatcher's vote of the same weight as mine?"

"Of the same weight, Sir William. Old Bill has to live under the laws of the land, even as you do, and has of right an equal share in selecting those who make them."

"Now, by the Lord Harry!" exclaimed the baronet. "I have never heard the like. Tell me, Delaroche, are such things as these the general will of your party?"

"That I cannot say," was the reply. "Or, rather, I know that in our party there is a multitude of minds and some quite contrary to others in many things. Yet I have talked with many, both in the army and elsewhere; and I think that something like what I have said will prove the general mind. 'Tis a tremendous change, I'll own, and it may be there'll be other troubles than those with the King and his party before 'tis settled on."

"And what will you do with the Church?" asked Rector Lounsdale. "If your party prevails at last in the field, what settlement will there be as to that institution which is surely not the least of our concerns?"

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Myles did not reply at once, but while he gazed at the snowy landscape without, all the others awaited his word. At last he said, slowly and with many pauses:

"Each citizen will be free to choose his own mode of worship—to ally himself with any church or with no church as seems best to him. Each congregation will order its own ceremonial without compulsion from without—and the state, instead of interfering, will protect them all alike in such liberty."

"And who will collect the tithes and the other rates for the Church's maintenance?" pursued the Rector.

"There will be no tithes and no rates for any church other than those that men impose on themselves. No church whatever will be supported by the State, but the State will protect them all alike."

"And thus make hedge preachers of us all," said the Rector with rising color and flashing eye.

"If you like to call it so, sir."

"And so you'd authorize all these sectaries—these howlers and screamers and rollers—to hold forth where'er and howe'er they pleased?" demanded James Dalrymple. "'Tis arrant foolishness as well as treason. Why! know you not that some of them do counsel immorality of all sorts—aye and commit the foulest crimes—because, forsooth, they're saints on earth—and justified?"

"He has you there, Master Delaroche," declared Sir William. "The liberty you talk of would in no time run to grossest license, and we would have a state

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of affairs against which such men as yourself would be the first to take up arms. 'Twill never do, I tell you."

"Offenses against civil law and order," answered Myles, "can be punished by the civil courts as well then as now. We grant a man liberty of conscience; but if he says his religion bids him throw his children into the river, and does so, we will hang him for murder—or at the least confine him as a lunatic. Likewise, if he make his religion a cloak for robbery or any other offense against decent living and the rights of his neighbors, we will punish him exactly as any other scoundrel."

Sir William shook his head violently and began again to pace up and down the room. The Rector looked gloomily at the fire and the old Registrar glared at his nephew as might a judge on the bench at a confirmed and defiant criminal. At last the baronet paused before Myles and delivered his opinion in the tone of one who makes final disposition of a foolish and dangerous error.

"A hundred years ago a man named More wrote a crack-brained book that he called *Utopia*. In it he pictured a state wherein all wrongs were righted and all men were happy and prosperous. The only trouble with it was that 'twas totally impossible for any community of men and women who ever lived or ever will live on the earth. Now we hear of the new—the Puritan Utopia—wherein every man is a lord and every hedge preacher a clergyman. I'm glad to

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know at last just what it is they aim at in the Parliament camp and to what lengths their folly will carry them. And now that I have heard it, by the Lord Harry! I'm stronger than ever for Church and King. And I predict, Master Delaroche, that if your life is spared for ten years longer, you'll acknowledge that I was right and that your atheist lawyers and your howling sectaries were wrong. 'Tis not such as they that can administer a state."

"You *are* right, Sir William," said the clergyman warmly.

"Aye, who can doubt it?" shouted Dalrymple. "The whole rebellion is only an attempt by thieves and 'prentices and Gifted Tinkers to grasp that which belongs to their betters. And, praise be to God! 'tis nearly done for."

Myles made no answer but sat gazing at the floor. He had not hoped for converts in such a gathering, but at first had spoken merely in answer to the questionings of those who had just proven themselves his friends, and later as carried forward on a great flood of emotion the sources of which were beyond his knowledge. After a minute or two Arthur Hinsdale relieved the tension by an inquiry as to the depth of the snow without. Soon the conversation on indifferent subjects became general, and Myles, whose heart was heavy with the dismal prospects of his party and himself, was able to withdraw from the hall without further words.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THUNDERBOLT

NEXT morning the party was assembled in the hall before the sun had fairly risen. Sir William and Arthur were planning a ride to a distant outpost where they wished to arrive before midday; and Rector Lounsedale was to accompany them. When the breakfast was concluded, and while they awaited the saddling of the horses, the baronet again addressed his prisoner-guest.

"It is not yet too late, Master Delaroche, to accept our counsel of yesterday. With a good mount and without misadventure, the journey to the port may be made within two days' time."

But Myles again shook his head.

"I thank you most heartily, Sir William," he said, "but I cannot abandon the cause of the Parliament."

"Why cannot you see reason?" demanded James Dalrymple, roughly. "Zounds, sir, do you think it's a pleasure to me and to Lucy here to see a kinsman of ours, be he never so misguided, headed straight for the hangman's noose?"

"I think 'twill hardly come to that," said Myles quietly. "I was made prisoner in fair fighting."

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"But I tell you it *will* come to that," shouted the Registrar, his voice breaking with excitement, his plump face turning to a beetlike redness and his hands rapidly opening and closing. "Did'st not hear Sir William yesterday? Your name is on the list as one of those attainted. The breakdown of your ragamuffin army cannot be many months away; and, following that, the laws will be duly executed upon all such."

"Even so," returned Myles, "I must await my fortune."

"Think again, Myles," urged Arthur. "'Tis not likely that Essex can ever again take the field. We have new supplies of men and arms, and your armies everywhere break down. They will hardly last till spring."

"The Parliament has no commanders," said Sir William. "Always they fritter away such chances as come their way in hesitation and dispute among themselves. Such leaders ——"

At that instant came a mighty crash as of a lighthouse tower struck by a thunderbolt. Fragments of masonry hurtled across the room and larger masses fell inward upon the floor from a portion of the outer wall near the ceiling where now a gaping hole gave a view of bare tree branches and the blue sky beyond.

The women screamed with fright, and James Dalrymple's ruddy countenance turned in an instant to the color of clay.

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"Cannon!" shouted Sir William. "We are attacked!"

With Arthur and Myles at his side, he rushed to the broad window and gazed in the direction whence the shot must have come. Half a mile away, where a winding road surmounted a wooded hilltop, they dimly descried the forms of men who ran about some object half concealed by the undergrowth. Then a puff of smoke issued from a hidden throat of iron, and another hideous crash told of the fall of the chimney over the south wing of the manor house. Soldiers, with arms and without, came rushing into the room, demanding orders; and Sir William gave hurried commands for manning all defences and for replying to the cannon fire from the culverins already mounted on the second floor.

Then came a burst of musketry from the hillside just beyond the village and from a sunken road that flanked the manor on the other side. A hail of bullets spattered against the walls and in a dozen places pierced the windows.

"Lie down on the floor!" shouted Myles to Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy who were clinging to one another near the center of the room. The trembling women obeyed at once, and James Dalrymple quickly followed their example. Myles glanced once more through the shattered window, and saw the soldiers of the Parliament swarming through Hinsdale village. They were taking advantage of the cover of

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houses and walls, and firing and reloading as they advanced. One yelling group had surrounded the inn and was breaking down the doors.

By this time the room was filled with the royalist troopers, armed with swords and muskets. Sheltering themselves behind the window ledges, they were already exchanging fire with the attackers. The culverin roared overhead and shook the house like another stroke from the hostile guns. Sir William was running from place to place, exhorting and directing his men and pointing out to them where bodies of the enemy were exposed to their fire. Coming to the young Puritan captain, he seized his arm, with a half frantic clutch.

"Myles," he shouted, beseechingly, "wilt thou not take Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy to the cellars and remain with them till we know the outcome of this? There will be some measure of safety there—at least from musketry."

"Aye, sir," answered Myles at once. "'Tis well bethought."

Stooping over his wife where she and Lucy lay in the middle of the floor, the baronet quickly explained this move for their safety, and Myles urged them to go at once and on hands and knees to the kitchen door and the cellar stair. Bullets now whizzed through the room continually and buried themselves in the walls. Two or three of the soldiers had been hit, and one lay dead on the floor. James Dalrymple

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joined the humble procession toward the cellarway; but Rector Lounsdale rejected all urging to do likewise. With the air of a prophet, strengthening the hearts of a chosen people against the invasion of the heathen, he was marching up and down the hall with an open Bible in his hand. Wildly gesticulating the while, he declaimed to the soldiers tremendous passages as to the certain triumph of a righteous cause and fierce denunciations of their enemies as despoilers of the Temple. Myles could not but feel a measure of admiration for such whole-heartedness, mistaken though he deemed it, and, if he might, would gladly have prevailed on the Rector to take shelter. But the old clergyman would hear nothing from him; and his first duty at the moment was elsewhere. So the young Puritan turned away and followed the other noncombatants down the stairs to the half darkness of the basement.

Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy were crouching in the wine cellar, the deepest of the vaults. Its flagging was four or five yards beneath the main floor and surrounded by walls of hewn stone that made their retreat seem utterly secure. James Dalrymple was standing before them—his natural color and confidence returned—telling them over and over that there was no need for them to be frightened—that the rebels would soon be routed, or, at the least, compelled to give over the attack, by the stout resistance the King's forces were making.

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“Hark to them!” he declaimed as the musketry quickened overhead. “Gallant boys that they are! Will they give over a stout fortress like this to those scurvy ragamuffins? Moreover, Prince Rupert may be here anon, and chase this rabble back to their holes—those that are left alive. He’ll ——”

Another crash like that which had first announced the attack drowned out the old royalist’s words. For ten seconds afterward a series of thunderous blows on the floor directly overhead announced the fall of masonry that had been loosened by the cannon ball. The women screamed again, and Myles watched keenly for any sign of yielding from the floor planks. But these were of seasoned oak, and although they roared with the impact of the stones, they yet held firm, and only showered dust upon the occupants of the vault.

The musketry firing was now continuous, and covered all the other sounds of battle save an occasional deep boom from the culverins. No bullets and not even cannon shot could penetrate to the vault; and it seemed to Myles that if the floor overhead did not give way, the siege might go on for hours with no harm to those who had so strangely been placed under his care. Meanwhile his mind was filled with other plans for their safety. As his eyes became more accustomed to the murk, he espied a place where the stone wall jutted out over the floor, leaving a cave-like space beneath in which some casks of wine had been stored. Rolling these aside, he placed in their

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room some low, rough stools which had been left in the vault, and induced Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy to seat themselves upon them.

He knew that his uncle was right in one respect: this post was too far within the royalist lines to permit the Parliament forces to remain in its vicinity for any long period. Either they must quickly prevail or give over the attack and make retreat before they were themselves overwhelmed. Such an assault, even with cannon, seemed not likely to result in complete destruction of their refuge.

Then, like a knife stab, came the thought of fire. What if the manor house caught fire during the bombardment like many others he had seen where red hot cannon balls or the scattered brands from the hearth set the woodwork aflame? If this came to pass, would they not be penned in and suffocated before any aid could reach them? For a moment his mind dealt swiftly with the problem thus presented. Then, in a voice made steady by a tremendous effort of will, he asked of Mistress Hinsdale:

"Is there any door, Madame, that leads directly from the cellars to the outer air?"

"No," answered the lady, wonderingly, "there is none such on this side of the house; and between here and the other cellars, whence a door opens on the lower court, there is a wall of brick."

"But windows there must be."

"Aye, one or two in the outer cellar next to this."

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"I think I'll go and look at them," said Myles slowly. "If the firing continues, we may have need to open one for air."

"But that we cannot do," cried Mistress Hinsdale, "for all the windows of the cellar are fitted with stout iron gratings to guard against thieves."

"Aye, Madame, so I supposed. But I will see what can be done nevertheless."

Quickly he left the vault and took himself to the outer cellar. There his eyes soon confirmed Mistress Hinsdale's words, for the two narrow windows, just beneath the sills, were eight or nine feet from the floor and covered with strong iron bars that seemingly made escape impossible. A moment's search, however, revealed a stout plank some ten feet long which lay in a corner behind some empty casks. Using this as a battering ram, the young captain quickly broke one of the bars. Then, employing the plank as a lever, with the window frame as a fulcrum, he wrenched the others from their fastenings. He was about to break out the sash, but reflected just in time that this could be done very quickly at need, and that it might be better to delay. That which was most needful as a means of escape was something to take the place of a ladder, to enable Mistress Hinsdale and the others to reach the window. This too was quickly secured. Rolling the largest of the empty casks to a place under the window, he set it on end, then placed upright upon it another of half its capacity. The top

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of the smaller barrel came within two feet of the window ledge; and the two made approach to it no difficult task. This he proved by climbing up at once and peering through a broken pane.

What he saw made his heart leap as it had on that terrible day at Edgehill when it seemed that the whole royal army bore down upon them. A triple line of carbineers and swordsmen advanced at a run across the fields from the direction of the village, and were already within forty rods of the manor house. Myles knew them at once for dismounted cavalry and dragoons, fighting here on foot because of the nature of the ground and of the position they attacked. Their leader, a stout, broad-shouldered man of middle age, ran five or six yards in advance of the frontmost line, brandishing a saber, shouting like a madman and leaping with surprising lightness over the ditches and low hedges that beset the way.

Over Myles' head crashed volleys of musketry. Scores of men in the attacking line fell on their faces in the grass, rolled into the ditch water or hung over the hedges with arms and legs asprawl like scarecrows flung aside at harvest time. But gaps in the lines were quickly closed, and the Puritans came on with a rush and with a shouted hallelujah that for an instant made itself heard above all the din of arms.

Myles leaped to the floor and hastened to the inner vault. There Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy were still seated on the rough stools he had found for them, and

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James Dalrymple was still declaiming of the folly and weakness of their enemies.

At that moment the din overhead was redoubled. Shouts and oaths mingled with the clash of steel and scattered musket shots; and Myles knew that the attackers had penetrated the manor house. The floors again resounded with the rush of trampling feet and with the fall of heavy bodies. The musketry fire died down and disappeared, but steel rang on steel continuously, and gun butts and axes were furiously plied against oaken doors. Terrific roaring sounds, as of earthquake or avalanche, told of blocks of stone that had been loosened from the upper walls by cannon fire and that were now hurled down the stairways from the landings on the second floor on the heads of invaders who sought to mount from below.

For several minutes the horrible din seemed steadily to increase. Mistress Hinsdale covered her ears with her hands and tightly closed her eyes. Lucy buried her face in the older woman's lap, and Master Dalrymple sank to the floor beside them. Then little by little the sounds of battle grew fainter and seemed to proceed from more distant portions of the house. Finally they ceased altogether save for occasional footfalls and shouted commands. Then came the clear notes of a bugle in the call of assembly.

Myles pushed open the door of the vault with the intention of mounting to the hall. But at that in-

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stant the door at the head of the stairway was violently flung open and half a dozen soldiers rushed down the steps. The faces of some were bloody with recent wounds. Some had their arms half filled with articles of silver and gold they had rifled from the rooms of the manor house. And one bore a flaming torch and a water bucket that had been caught up in the kitchen.

“Wine!” he shouted hoarsely. “Wine!”

“Here!” called another. “Here is the vault. Here’s wine and brandy both, I warrant.”

Myles had stepped back and closed the door; but now it was forced open again and ugly faces were thrust through the opening. One huge fellow, peering about among the wine casks, made out the figures of the women in the shadow.

“Ha!” he gloated, “here’s wine indeed, and here’s other prizes of our victory.”

But his further speech was interrupted by Myles Delaroche who had placed himself between the women and their threateners.

“Men,” he said, sternly, “I am Captain Delaroche of Stapleton’s Horse in the army of the Parliament. Turn about and leave this place at once. Did you not hear the bugle?”

For an instant the soldiers hesitated. Then the tall ruffian who had first espied the women answered jeeringly:

“Ah-h-h! a likely tale this from one of your seem-

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ing! Where is your uniform? And what do you here if you're of the Parliament?"

"I have been a prisoner here," was the reply. "And will now report to your leader. Now turn about, and quickly, lest I inform your captain of your whereabouts."

A loud and reckless laugh greeted this command; and Myles saw with dismay that the men before him were already half intoxicated. No doubt these were the ones he had seen an hour before, assaulting the doors of the inn. With a hideous leer on his face, the leader advanced toward Lucy, trailing his carbine along the floor as he went. Myles endeavored to spring before him; but a rush of three or four of the others pushed him to one side. James Dalrymple thrust himself before his daughter and menaced the soldier with double fists. But this brave defense, like that of Chanticleer facing the fox, proved of little avail. With a laugh of glee, the ruffian swung up his carbine from the floor, and thrust the butt straight at the old man's face. The poor Registrar received the full force of the blow from the iron-shod stock, and instantly fell down like an ox in the butcher's shambles.

But Myles Delaroche was yet to be reckoned with. When the troopers had thrust him aside he had stooped to the floor and seized one of the oaken stools. Whirling this through the air, he brought it down on the head of the nearest of the assailants,

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felling him instantly. Then without a second's loss of time he attacked the leader who had already seized Lucy's wrist. The first blow was warded by an uplifted arm; but the second, swiftly following from another direction, fell full on the ruffian's skull, so that his knees crumpled under him and he fell, face downwards.

Some of the soldiers, fearing a like fate for themselves, attempted to rush out through the door; but three of the others recklessly attacked the young captain with swords and musket butts. Myles was whirling the stool around his head in dizzying circles, crouching and dodging the while to avoid the blows of his antagonists. Another moment would certainly have seen more deadly work, when a deep voice was heard from the doorway in shouted command:

"Hold! What have we here? Hold, sir. You are a prisoner."

The soldiers lowered their weapons, and Myles let the stool fall to the floor.

"Cromwell!" he exclaimed.

"Aye, Cromwell," was the grim response. "I never yet have had occasion to deny it. But who are you, pray, that thus prolongs defense of a post already taken? And who are these women?"

"I am Captain Delaroche of Stapleton's Horse," was the reply. "And these ladies are the wife of Sir William Hinsdale and Mistress Lucy Dalrymple."



THEN WITHOUT A SECOND'S LOSS OF TIME HE ATTACKED THE LEADER
WHO HAD ALREADY SEIZED LUCY'S WRIST.

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"Of Stapleton's Horse?" demanded Cromwell.
"Then you are traitor to the cause of Parliament."

"No, sir," answered Myles, steadily. "I was a prisoner here, having been taken two days ago, after the destruction in Dugdale Wood of a detachment of which I had command."

"Ah! Something of that I have heard," said Cromwell with lowering countenance. "A most well planned destruction, I'll be bound—one that will well bear looking into. So now you fight for the Maligants, as once for the Parliament's cause. Well, sir, I can give most earnest thanks for having taken you. There have been several of your sort of late that have bargained their eternal welfare for gold and honors, and that now shelter themselves under the banner of him they call the king at Oxford. An example will be most mightily wholesome."

"Colonel Cromwell," returned Myles, "I am no traitor. I was a prisoner here, and as such was sent to the cellars with these noncombatants. These men here, who disgrace the cause of the Parliament with their drunkenness and robbery, would have borne away the ladies had I not interfered. They would not believe I was a Parliament officer, so it came to blows, as you saw. Would you, as an English gentleman, have acted differently?"

Cromwell gazed piercingly at the young captain, then slowly shook his head. "A well told tale," he muttered, "but 'twill little serve with me, for many

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times before I've heard smooth tongues glozing over the deeds of treason and malignancy." Turning to the soldiers, he ordered:

"Get ropes and bind his arms securely behind his back. Then bring all these people—or all such as are still alive to the hall. There we will deal with them."

Some of the troopers hastened to do his bidding; a rope was quickly found and Myles' wrists fastened together behind him. James Dalrymple, who was now stirring and moaning, was borne up the stairs. The soldier who had been first to fall before Myles' attack had sufficiently recovered to be able to sit erect; but he who had acted as ringleader had received the full force of a wide-swung blow and would never stir again.

Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy were marched up the stairs ahead of Myles, and he was closely followed by the Puritan commander. In the hall above, the first persons whom they saw were Sir William and Arthur Hinsdale, both of whom had been slightly wounded in the fighting, and now stood with a dozen other prisoners with their arms tightly bound. Dead and wounded men of both parties lay all about; and the house, with all its costly furnishing, was a scene of chaos and ruin. In a pool of blood in the middle of the floor, lay the body of the white-haired old Rector, with a bullet hole through the forehead.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRISONERS

HO! What's this?" called Sir William to the Puritan commander when the procession halted in the hall. "You have made prisoner one of your own men."

"Aye," growled Cromwell. "Our man he *was* till the Devil tempted him. But were it not for the loss of the example on others who might be meditating a similar treason, I'd have him hanged forthwith from a limb of these oaks here rather than burden one of my horses with him. As it is, he journeys with me, and thus may live another day."

"What mean you by that?" demanded the baronet. "Captain Delaroche is as staunch a Parliament man as any of you; and to that I can well bear witness."

"Oh, aye!" was the grim response. "You can doubtless bear witness to anything whatever that you fancy will help the cause of Charles Stuart. We have heard enough and more than enough of such testimony."

Sir William's eyes flashed, and he would have made an angry reply, but his son sprang before him,

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and, with his face contorted with rage, confronted the Puritan officer.

"You scurvy son of a brewer!" he shouted. "You know no more of honor than does one of your own malting tubs, else you would never cast a mortal insult in the face of a man whose hands are bound behind his back. I tell you the Hinsdales speak the truth of their enemies as of their friends. And I say that Captain Delaroche is a truer servant of the Parliament than you have ever been."

Cromwell spat contemptuously on the floor and expelled his breath between loosely held lips as though he would blow away such useless vaporings.

"All this comes to nothing," he growled. "And you, young sir, as a prisoner duly taken, are safe from the chastisement that would certainly overtake you otherwise."

Then, turning to some of his officers, he went on rapidly:

"See that all the wounded of both parties are taken from the house and borne to the village where they may be cared for. Assemble the companies at once on that rise of ground yonder and bring all the prisoners there, securely bound. Look especially to this fellow, Delaroche. Should he escape, I will instantly hang whoever had him in charge. Now look to it."

Turning on his heel, he strode through the hall and out through the ruined doorway. A moment later a bugle sounded from the knoll a hundred paces

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distant, and all the officers and men not detailed for special duties hurried thither. Soon the companies were reformed and stood in two solid squares, facing the half ruined manor. The prisoners were drawn up at one side, under the guard of a sergeant and a dozen or more of the troopers. Ten minutes later an officer reported to Colonel Cromwell that all the wounded had been removed.

"You are sure that no living person remains?" questioned his superior, sharply.

"Aye, sir. We have made most careful search."

"Then make ready your bombs. Put one under that tower at the farther end and another here by the main doorway."

The captain saluted and turned away. In a moment his men were busily engaged at the points indicated, cases of powder were carried forward and the mines duly laid. Then, while Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy buried their faces in their arms, and the other prisoners watched with staring eyes, two soldiers ran forward with torches to the ends of powder trains which had been laid from the bombs to points fifty paces from the building. There was a hiss and a flash, and two fiery serpents leaped forward toward the manor house. Then came two thunderous reports in quick succession. The tower leaped upward and the front wall of the house split and fell apart as though an earthquake heaved its base. There was a fearful crash of falling stone, and for a moment

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the scene was hidden in a cloud of smoke and dust. Then this was swept aside by a puff of wind, and the watchers on the knoll beheld a shapeless mass of stone and brick and timber which was all that remained of Hinsdale Hall.

Cromwell turned sharply about, and addressed his second in command.

"Assemble the horses," he rasped, "and be prepared to ride at once. Send word to our cannoneers also. Find horses for the prisoners. They will ride directly under our observation. As for these women, we will not detain them. They will doubtless find occupation in nursing the wounded."

Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy, with tears streaming down their faces, moved toward the prisoners and spent with them such time as was allowed in tender farewells and in mutual promises of letters or messages at the first opportunity. All too soon the troopers were in readiness for the road; the prisoners were bidden to mount the horses provided for them, and the women were ordered away. At a walk, the column proceeded up the road toward the wooded hill-top. There it was joined by the cannoneers who, with each of their lumbering weapons drawn by four stout horses, now took up a place in the middle of the line. Half an hour after the destruction of the manor house, the neighborhood was as quiet as though the war had never approached within a day's journey.

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Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy Dalrymple hurried to the village to see what provision had been made for the wounded. James Dalrymple had been borne to the miller's cottage, and there they found him sitting on a couch in an inner room, alternately bathing his bruised face and head with a lotion of vinegar which the housewife had provided and loudly cursing the Roundheads. Concluding from the vigor of his language that the old Registrar's life was in no present danger, his daughter and Mistress Hinsdale, after a few minutes at his bedside, went on to the other cottages where the injured soldiers were lying.

There were a score or more of these, with hurts varying from severe flesh wounds to sword or bullet strokes through the throat or body that would soon prove mortal. The poor fellows were being attended by the village doctor and by a number of the housewives of the neighborhood who were giving their best efforts to the nursing of friends and foes alike. Mistress Hinsdale gave orders that everything needful should be supplied, and despatched a messenger to the nearest town for certain medicines of which the doctor had not a sufficient quantity. This done, it was apparent that they could be of little further assistance.

Since the column had disappeared over the hill, Lucy had moved about, white-faced and with the air of one in a dream. Now she drew the elder lady aside and whispered eagerly:

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"Mistress Hinsdale, the people here, and even my father, can do without our aid; but those who are the prisoners of that terrible Roundhead cannot. At this moment they are in deadly peril."

"I know," answered Mistress Hinsdale, distractedly, "but what can we do?"

"We can go to that Roundhead leader and tell him the truth."

"Oh! of what avail would that be? He would not listen to Sir William. Is it likely that he will listen to us?"

"It *may* be that he will. We can tell the whole tale of the fight in the wine cellar, and show that Myles did only what any English gentleman should do—even as he said himself. The Roundheads are not wolves and bears. It must be they will hear reason."

"But how can we come to them?"

"Can we not procure horses and ride after them? Even yet we might overtake them ere nightfall. And they have a camp at Stafford, I have heard."

"We will do so!" cried Mistress Hinsdale, her face lighting with the resolution that already shone from her companion's countenance. "Old Squire Albree has horses he will lend us, though he is himself past riding. We will borrow cloaks and bonnets from the miller's wife. And we can take two or three stout fellows from the village here to act as guards."

"But Mistress Hinsdale," said Lucy, anxiously, "do you not fear that such guards will be worse than

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none? Would they not be more likely to draw attack from the Roundheads than to protect us from danger?"

"You are right, Lucy. Yours is an old head on young shoulders, I'll be bound. Our fellows would either be shot down by any Roundheads whom we met, or, at the least, be seized and pressed into their companies. 'Twill be safer indeed without them. We'll ride by ourselves."

A village urchin was found to run to the farmhouse of old Squire Albree with a note from Mistress Hinsdale. Poor James Dalrymple was acquainted with their design and his complaints and objections overcome. Lucy quickly recounted to him the events in the wine cellar after he had received the stunning blow from the musket butt, and dwelt on Myles' imminent peril at the hands of the Roundhead colonel. At length the old Registrar, whose mental processes were still far from clear, gave a confused and grudging consent. When half an hour had passed, the lad returned from Squire Albree's, riding one of a pair of old plow horses and leading the other. Then, without further loss of time, the ladies mounted and rode away at a canter in the wake of the Puritan soldiery.

For two or three hours they drove forward at the best pace that could be secured from their heavy and lumbering steeds. Then they caught sight of the rear guard, a mile or so before them. By this time they had agreed that it would not be best to attempt their

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intercession with the Puritan commander while his troops were still on the march, so for the rest of the day they followed the column at a foot pace, taking care to keep out of sight of scouts and stragglers. It was after dark when the detachment rode into camp at Stafford; and soon after the two ladies confronted the sentinels and demanded audience of Colonel Cromwell.

Cromwell received them in the kitchen of the magistrate's house which he had made his headquarters. A sentry was on guard at the door; and the colonel, who was otherwise alone, was busily writing at a table. His clothes were still splashed with mud from his riding, his long, coarse hair was in disorder and a stubble of gray beard further roughened his stern and forbidding countenance. His steeple-crowned hat, with its buckle of rusted steel, was on the floor beside him, and the heavy sword which he had swung at Hinsdale lay across one end of the table. As soon as he recognized his visitors, he frowned heavily, and, rising from his chair, demanded roughly:

"How comes this, madame? Are all those who were wounded at Hinsdale so soon mended?"

"The wounded men are being cared for, sir, as well as may be," answered Mistress Hinsdale in spirited tones, "but we have ridden after you in order that you may hear the truth in regard to one whom you hold prisoner and whom we fear is in danger of death."

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"Your husband, madame, is a prisoner of war; and so is the younger man, who I understand is your son. They will be safely held as such and are in no danger of execution."

"Aye, of so much I am right glad to be assured. But you have another prisoner whom you have been pleased to call a traitor, and have threatened with hanging. This young lady and I, who know the truth of the matter, have come to tell you he is none such. We have indeed the best of reasons for knowing he is entirely loyal to your side in the war."

Cromwell's frown grew deeper, and he stared menacingly at the trembling lady for what seemed an endless time before making reply:

"And I, madame, have the best of reasons for knowing he is false as the fiends of Hell. Now of what use is it for you to come to me with a tale that is calculated to save from the gallows one whom your partisans—perhaps your husband and son themselves—have seduced from his bounden duty? I find Captain Delaroche fighting with all his strength in the defense of Hinsdale Hall against my attack. He wounded one of my men and killed another outright. I find him with no trace of uniform or other mark of his rank in the Parliament's army, but wearing the vain and costly raiment of those who style themselves Cavaliers. But, forsooth, he claims he is no traitor but a prisoner in the house, and that all along he has been loyal to the Parliament."

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"Colonel Cromwell," said Mistress Hinsdale, firmly, "Captain Delaroche, only yesterday, was offered safe-conduct out of England if he would abandon the Parliament's quarrel; and this he refused."

"Aye," interposed Lucy, "and once again this very morning."

"And who are you, Mistress Malapert?" demanded Cromwell. "Are you not the daughter of that James Dalrymple who has been in the thick of every royalist plot hatched by the traitors and malignants of London since the flight of the King?"

"My father is loyal to his sovereign," answered Lucy, hotly. "And he has suffered for it. It is none the less true that some of your half drunken troopers sought to lay violent hands on Mistress Hinsdale and myself, and that 'twas this that caused Captain Delaroche to oppose them with whatever weapon came to hand. Will you send him to the gallows for that?"

Cromwell turned a lowering face toward Mistress Hinsdale. "To-morrow morning," he said, slowly, "a court-martial will be convened in this room at nine o'clock, to try the case of Captain Delaroche, charged with desertion and treason. If the officers who make up that court do their duty—as I have no doubt they will—Captain Delaroche will be found guilty by the half hour past; and at ten o'clock he will be hanged."

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"Oh, brutal!" cried Mistress Hinsdale.

"You claim to fight for justice," said Lucy, her voice half choked with sobs, "and you hang innocent men in this wise. Think you that England will long endure such justice as that?"

The Puritan leader seated himself and took up his pen. "Ladies," he replied, grimly, "I have said my word on this matter. And now I have other things to do. Please you, take yourselves from this encampment as quickly as you may. You have not yet been restrained, but that too may be necessary if you trouble us further."

Thus repulsed, the weeping women moved toward the open door, and quickly found themselves in the darkness without. Half blinded by their tears, they stumbled through the streets to the place on the outskirts of the village where their horses had been left when they were first challenged by the sentry. Soon they had remounted and were riding toward the west, along the wintry road by which they had come.

CHAPTER XVIII

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FOR a mile or two after leaving the village, the two women rode in silence. The night was dark, with no hint of a moon; faint stars half pierced the drifting cloud, and a gusty wind sighed through the branches of the wayside trees. The dimly seen track underfoot was a mixture of mud and snow through which their horses labored painfully. Thick and high on either side, stood old neglected hedgerows, and the gray hillsides beyond seemed utterly deserted and forlorn.

Mistress Hinsdale, in the lead, rode with her head bent low in scrutiny of the road. Lucy had thrown her bridle rein on the pommel of her saddle, leaving her horse to follow his comrade on the homeward way, and now crouched forward with eyes half closed and her hands folded across her breast like a hopeless prisoner on the way to an unknown destination. The night was chill, with the knifelike sharpness of approaching frost; and the girl was but lightly clad. She was faint with weariness and with the heartsickness that came from the utter failure of her plan

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for Myles' rescue and the miserable certainty of his fate.

Over and over she seemed to hear the grim sentence of the Puritan colonel—to-morrow morning at nine o'clock—at nine o'clock—at nine o'clock; and, as her horse plodded steadily onward, these ominous words formed themselves in her half-numbed brain into a refrain like that of a senseless jingle or the words one's imagination will attach to the rhythmic thud and creaking of a mill or wagon wheel. In this dull and hopeless mood she had lost all interest in her surroundings. The happenings of the near or distant future, save for this one impending disaster, seemed of little consequence; and she neither knew nor cared to know whether her companion intended to ride the whole distance to Hinsdale under the cover of darkness or would seek food and shelter at some inn or farmhouse on the way.

Suddenly she sat erect and firmly seized her bridle reins. "Mistress Hinsdale!" she called, in a low, half-choked voice that yet seemed loud on the deserted high road, "wait for a moment, I pray you."

The elder lady turned in surprise and alarm, and quickly brought her mount to a stop. Lucy meanwhile had come forward to her side. Now she whispered, excitedly:

"Is there not a left-hand turning, to which we shall come soon, that leads from this road to Wicksbury where the Earl of Manchester is encamped?"

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"Aye, I think so," answered Mistress Hinsdale, wonderingly, "but our road lies straight through Benham Wood and Latham."

"How far, think you, would it be to Wicksbury?"

"Why, 'tis twelve leagues and more—a good day's ride. What are you thinking on?"

"Mistress Hinsdale," said Lucy, her voice still low, but level and determined, "*we must ride to Wicksbury this night*. I have bethought me how we will yet save Myles Delaroche—he who risked both life and honor to save us from those ruffians."

"What can we do at Wicksbury?"

"Listen. This Colonel Cromwell who just now drove us from his presence, is not the general of the Parliament army, though we have heard so much of him of late we may have come to think so. Lord Manchester is his superior. You know Sir William told to us three days ago that Manchester is the general of all the Puritan forces in the Midlands. Now let us ride and tell our tale to him. He is one that can judge whether or no we speak the truth."

"'Tis so," murmured Mistress Hinsdale, "I once met Manchester. Twenty years ago it was; and he will have forgotten me. But he is a gentleman, I know, and possibly may listen."

"Surely he *must* listen. We will *make* him do so."

"But how can we journey so far and on such a night? 'Tis twelve leagues and more. There may be robbers—in these wild days the roads are dan-

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gerous everywhere, even in broad day. There's a long way the road goes through woodlands; and the path is so narrow that we may easily lose it in such darkness. And we may meet with Roundhead soldiers who will be worse than robbers."

"To-morrow morning, at nine o'clock—" said Lucy, slowly.

For a moment her companion hesitated; then she spurred her horse forward. "We will go," she said, between clenched teeth. "God will protect us while on such an errand. But we have no time to lose. Let us not miss the turning."

Soon thereafter their horses' heads had been turned toward Wicksbury and a long and weary journey was begun. The poor old steeds, knowing well that they now faced away from their dry and comforting stalls and well-filled mangers, went forward most unwillingly, seeming to protest that a day's work and more had already been done. Except in the immediate neighborhood of the towns, the road was little better than a muddy track through the fields and moors, and constant watchfulness was necessary to avoid losing it in the darkness. Fortunately, it was somewhat familiar to Mistress Hinsdale, as she had twice ridden over it in years gone by, and was able to recall the right turnings at the crossroads.

Twice they made long detours to avoid the principal streets of villages where soldiers might be quartered and sentries posted; and these delays made

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necessary a rigorous spurring of their mounts on the open stretches. They must reach Manchester's quarters long before sunrise, for if the general were prevailed upon to grant reprieve, his messengers must arrive at Stafford before Cromwell's court martial had completed its work. So the riders pushed forward determinedly, insisting on a sharp trot through muddy hollows where, under any other circumstance, a walking pace would have well contented them, and flogging their mounts to a gallop whenever they found themselves on firmer ground.

Thus riding, they had covered by midnight more than half the distance to Wicksbury, and had come to the edge of Kenmoor Wood. From this point, as Mistress Hinsdale told her companion in half whispers, their road wound about among the forest hills and streams for twelve or fifteen miles ere it emerged on Wilby Common; and they must proceed more slowly lest they wander from the path in the darkness.

The ground was less trodden here, and but little snow had fallen, so the footing was better than on the open moors. The moon had risen, though its face was still thickly covered with clouds; and on the higher levels in the woodland or where the trees were widely spaced they could easily make out the road. But whenever the path dipped into deep valleys or wound among thick-growing underwood they rode in a pall of deepest blackness and must perforce depend on the instinct of their horses to avoid going

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hopelessly astray. In such gruesome places, where they could not see their hands before them, it was necessary to ride with heads bowed forward to avoid low-hanging branches that might otherwise tear their faces or pluck out their very eyes.

Emerging from such a valley of darkness, and looking up to note the road ahead, the riders both drew rein at once with gasps of surprise and fear and came near to crying out aloud. The path ran straight up the slope for fifty paces. At the summit, clearly outlined against the gray sky, were two armed and mounted men that had that moment appeared from the other side of the rise and now rode straight down upon them.

Without a word, Lucy turned her horse's head to one side and spurred away into the undergrowth. Mistress Hinsdale instantly followed her; and they might have gone some distance into the wood had they not encountered trunks and boughs so closely growing as to make progress impossible. So they remained perfectly still, scarcely ten feet from the trodden path, trembling with fear as with ague and praying for the darkness to cover them.

By great good fortune, their horses were both dark bays, and their cloaks and bonnets blue or black, so there was naught to catch the eye of any save the keenest observer. As the men came opposite it was clear from their weapons and their headgear that they were Puritan soldiers; they carried short-bar-

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reled, bell-mouthed musketoon and wore the steeple-crowned felt hats that were common in the Parliamentary army. The horses of the hidden riders were side by side and close together in the undergrowth. Mistress Hinsdale clutched the hand of her companion in a shuddering grip, and Lucy's tongue was fairly frozen to the roof of her mouth. So for an endless moment they sat, staring at the silent horsemen who moved slowly past into the gloom of the lower valley. For a minute or two longer the sound of hoof strokes was audible; then this too ceased, and the forest again became utterly still save for the moaning wind in the branches.

Mistress Hinsdale, who was nearer the road than Lucy, gave vent to a long sigh, then leaned backward in her saddle and tightened her bridle reins with the evident intent of backing her horse from the undergrowth. But Lucy, who was still listening intently, clutched her hand and sounded a low hiss of warning.

"What is it?" whispered Mistress Hinsdale.

"More riders," answered Lucy, tightening her handclasp. "Hist! There they come over the hill."

Now again the sound of hoofs was plainly heard, and louder than before. A numerous company was mounting the hill, and its leaders already appeared where the two silent horsemen had first been seen. Riding two by two, they came slowly down the slope, and passed the hiding place of the women. Fifty—sixty—a hundred of them rode past. Some were

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talking in low tones, and two or three were droning the words of a psalm, but most rode silently and with their heads bent low to keep the wintry wind from their throats.

When the last had gone by and the wood was still again, Lucy whispered:

"The first were scouts in advance. Let us wait a little longer. There may be a rear guard also."

A moment later the wisdom of this thought was proved by the appearance of two more soldiers who rode at the same walking pace in the wake of the others. When these also had disappeared and no hoof stroke or clink of arms could be heard, the women turned their horses back to the path and resumed their journey. The minutes they had passed in hiding had seemed like hours; delay of any sort might lead to failure, and they were more than ever fearful lest they arrive too late.

Splashing through shallow pools and streams, stumbling on hidden stones and toilsomely climbing the rough hillsides, the old work horses made unwilling speed through the forest. Two hours after the meeting with the cavalymen they crossed a timber bridge near a crossroad that Mistress Hinsdale remembered as being near the common and thus but two or three miles from Wicksbury. 'Already they could see the arch of sky ahead where their forest road emerged on the open land, and their hearts grew lighter with the thought of the journey's end.

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But they had not yet passed from beneath the forest trees when they heard behind them the thunder of many hoofs on the bridge planks. Mounted men had come from the crossroad and were riding in their wake. At this ominous sound the riders frantically set spurs to their horses' sides and urged them to a run.

Tired and worn as were their mounts, and little capable at any time of speed, the fugitives might soon have placed a safe distance between them and those who followed had it not been that as they rode up the slope toward the open their figures and those of their horses were outlined against the sky and thus easily to be seen by any in the valley behind them. As they drove forward, bending low over their horses' manes, a shout was heard, then a ringing command to halt and surrender. This being disregarded, a shot rang out and a bullet cut the twigs from branches over their heads.

Now they emerged on the snow-covered plain where there was no cover save a few scattered furze bushes that would hardly serve to hide a hunted fox. At the same instant the moon broke forth from the clouds and brightly lit the landscape far and near. The terror-stricken women spurred desperately on, regardless of everything save the thought of escape; but the poor old horses were already stumbling and wheezing; and now their pursuers had come to the edge of the wood. More shouts were heard, and

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again a musket roared. With a groan of despair Mistress Hinsdale drew her horse to a halt, and Lucy, who was a few paces ahead, turned about and rejoined her. Instantly they were surrounded by the soldiers, and one who seemed an officer sternly addressed them.

"Who are you, and what do you here? By my faith! 'tis women—or men that have donned women's clothing."

"Aye," answered Mistress Hinsdale, tremulously, "we are women surely, and on an errand of life and death."

"What are your names? And what your errand? Know you not this road is forbidden to all save the Parliament's forces?"

"Nay, we knew it not. I am Mistress Hinsdale of Hinsdale Hall; and my companion here is Mistress Dalrymple of London."

"Hinsdale Hall!" echoed the captain. "Then you are the wife of Sir William Hinsdale."

"Aye, truly."

"Then I should know you well," exclaimed the captain, peering eagerly the while at his prisoners. "I am Captain Drury, son of Squire Anton Drury of Wycomb Grange, scarce ten miles from Hinsdale. And more than once in happier days than these I have danced to the music of fiddles at Hinsdale Hall."

"Then, Captain," said Mistress Hinsdale, raising

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her head proudly, "do you not know me for the mistress of that house?"

"Aye, that I do, indeed!" cried Drury. "Now that I see you clearly I could swear it."

"Hinsdale Hall no longer exists," said the lady, sadly. "Your Colonel Oliver Cromwell took it by storm yesterday, and blew it up with gunpowder, after making prisoners of all that remained alive within it. Those prisoners included my husband and son and Captain Myles Delaroche."

"Captain Myles Delaroche of Stapleton's Horse?" questioned Drury in amazement. "Why, Mistress Hinsdale, how could he be made prisoner?"

"There's a long tale to tell of that," was the reply, "and 'tis the tale of our errand at Wicksbury. You may choose, Captain, to let your men ride on before us, and we will acquaint you with it fully."

The captain gave the necessary orders, and the troopers, under the command of a junior officer, resumed their march toward the town. Riding with the two ladies at fifty paces behind the company, Captain Drury was acquainted with the charges made against Myles Delaroche and the imminent peril in which he stood at the hands of Cromwell's court-martial.

"Why, this is intolerable!" cried Drury. "I know Captain Delaroche of old. He was my schoolfellow at Romney. He is no more a traitor to our cause than I am."

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"Nevertheless," said Lucy, "Cromwell will surely have him executed if none of higher authority intervene."

"It shall never be," declared Drury. "My Lord Manchester will not permit it."

"'Tis in that hope we ride to Wicksbury," said Mistress Hinsdale. "And we must make haste, for Colonel Cromwell brings together that court of his at nine o'clock."

"Then we *will* make haste, indeed," cried the captain. "Lord Manchester shall hear of this at once, if I pull him from his bed by force to tell it him. What ho, there, Bounderby! Let them gallop from here to the town's edge."

The lieutenant echoed the command, and the troop at once galloped forward with Captain Drury and his companions following at such speed as the weary old plow horses could muster. A few minutes later, just as the clocks were striking three, the party rode into the town and halted before the door of the general's quarters.

Captain Drury fairly overwhelmed the sentinels, insisting that his business could not wait an instant and that the general must be called at once. Roused by the tumult of voices, Lord Manchester called out from his sleeping room that he was rising. Five minutes later he appeared in the outer room, fully dressed and armed. Gravely acknowledging Captain Drury's introduction of Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy,

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he bade them be seated, and soon was listening closely to their account of the fight in Dugdale Wood, the storming of Hinsdale Hall, the arrest of Captain Delaroche and Colonel Cromwell's intentions with regard to his prisoner.

When the tale was finished and some few questions answered, Lord Manchester sat for a time in thought, while the others watched his countenance in breathless silence. At length the general reached for paper and pen, and wrote rapidly:

To Colonel Oliver Cromwell

Manchester's Army of the Parliament

Greetings:

On receipt of this order you will at once deliver all of the prisoners taken at Hinsdale Hall, including Sir William Hinsdale, Arthur Hinsdale and Captain Myles Delaroche, to the bearer, Captain Thomas Drury, who will bring them to Wicksbury. At the same time send to me your report of the action at Hinsdale and any recommendations as to the disposal of the prisoners.

Manchester.

As soon as he had finished, the general placed the paper before Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy and indicated to Captain Drury that he was to read it also. A moment sufficed to acquaint all three with its contents. Then Lord Manchester, addressing the captain, began speaking rapidly:

"Take twenty men, and the best horses you can

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find, and deliver that letter before nine o'clock. I will expect you here with the prisoners before night-fall. Send Gilsum to me at once, in order that he may find suitable quarters for these ladies."

Captain Drury saluted and withdrew. Sergeant Gilsum soon appeared to conduct the ladies to a house near by where they might find food and rest, and the general withdrew to his bedroom. Twenty minutes later, Captain Drury and his detachment rode out of the town at full gallop.

At five in the afternoon they reappeared, with the prisoners riding in their midst. Cromwell's report on the taking of Hinsdale Hall and related matters was delivered to the commander. Very soon thereafter Sir William and Arthur Hinsdale and Myles Delaroche, with Mistress Hinsdale and Lucy, were summoned to appear at headquarters. Each one in turn was bidden to tell the tale of Myles' captivity and of the fight in the wine cellar. When all had finished, the general, with hardly a moment's consideration, erased all charges against Myles and bade him return next day to his troop.

Sir William and Arthur were placed in the custody of Colonel Whitby, who held Northridge Castle for the Parliament; and Captain Drury was ordered to ride on the morrow with two companies of cavalry to escort the ladies on their return to Hinsdale Village.

CHAPTER XIX

NASEBY

THE downfall of the Puritan armies, so confidently predicted by their enemies in the winter of 1643, did not come to pass. On the contrary, the minor successes gained by Cromwell in the Midlands served to revive the drooping hopes of the Parliament party and proved the forerunners of great victories.

In June, Prince Rupert and Lord Newcastle were met on Marston Moor by the united armies of Fairfax, Manchester and Leven; and there the fiery young prince had ample fulfillment of his wish to meet Cromwell on the field. "Where is Cromwell?" Rupert had inquired on the eve of the battle. "If he meet us, he shall have enough of it." "If it please Heaven," was the Puritan's reply when the boast was reported to him, "so shall he."

No sooner was the battle begun than Cromwell seized the initiative and hurled his troopers against Rupert's unbeaten cavalry. A terrific struggle ensued, as when Greek met Greek at Leuctra. At the first shock Cromwell was forced back, as all others had been who had met Prince Rupert at the point of

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the sword. But the Parliament champion rallied his men and returned to the charge. At last the stern Puritans broke through the lines of their enemies, "scattering them like a little dust."

After Marston Moor, Lord Manchester placed Myles Delaroche in command of a regiment. Myles' elder brother, John, had returned from America, and was a captain in Essex's army. During the following winter the brothers spent three or four weeks together at Grimsby, and John was outspoken in his appreciation of the improvements which had been effected in his absence. He was himself an able and energetic administrator, and never tired of relating his struggles and triumphs in subduing the wilderness on his land grant in Massachusetts. This was a tract of five thousand acres in the fertile valley of the Connecticut. John had named it Cedricswold in honor of the first Delaroche. Already a substantial house and barn of logs had been erected, a herd of fifty cattle grazed among the stumps on the burnt-over and grass-sown hillsides, and more than a hundred acres were broken to the plow.

A curious turn in the fortunes of war gave Sir William and Arthur Hinsdale their liberty. Northridge Castle was taken by a sudden foray of the King's forces, much as Hinsdale Hall had been captured by Cromwell the previous year; and the prisoners were enabled to rejoin their regiments. Sir William's health had suffered during his confinement,

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but he insisted on rejoining the King's army as soon as he could ride. Mistress Hinsdale was living in a cottage at Hinsdale Village while agents of the Parliament administered the seized estate. James Dalrymple and Lucy were with the Court at Oxford.

In the spring of 1645 both sides felt sure the approaching campaign would be decisive. The armies of Charles had rallied after their disaster at Marston Moor, and the King had inflicted a defeat on Essex at Lostwithiel.¹ Cromwell and other clear-sighted men had urged in Parliament that the weakness of their army lay in its local and half organized character, it being after all merely an aggregation of the militia regiments of the counties. The organization of a New Model army was urged, this to be wholly under the authority of Parliament and to receive its pay from the general treasury. It was to consist mostly of volunteers—men whose principal interest was the success of the cause. Discipline was to be greatly strengthened, and the men were to be rigidly trained in the use of their weapons. No member of either House of Parliament was to hold a military commission.

These proposals, aided by Cromwell's stormy eloquence, finally prevailed, and work was begun immediately in the organization and drilling of the New Model Army, Lord Fairfax was given command, and Essex, Manchester, Waller and Cromwell, as members of Parliament, were excluded. The first three

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of these commanders had no further part in the conduct of the war, but the fourth, instead of being deprived of military office, actually found the way to high command made easy by the new enactment. Its real effect in respect to Cromwell was that two or three of those who outranked him were removed from his path. The post of lieutenant general—the second in command—was left open; and it was to this position that Cromwell very soon succeeded. He was already the most renowned of cavalry commanders, the victory at Marston Moor having raised his fame above that of Prince Rupert himself. Even with the new law in force, the Parliament majority found urgent need of Cromwell's services in the West, so a special exemption was made for his employment for forty days, and then for forty days thereafter. Finally it became evident that a great battle was impending which would decide the fate of the eastern counties and perhaps the outcome of the war. Fairfax eagerly applied to the Parliament for special permission to have Cromwell serve as lieutenant general. The occasion was a desperate one, and the Houses complied. On the morning of the thirteenth of June the hero of Marston Moor rode into Fairfax's quarters at Naseby at the head of a body of six hundred horse which he had hastily recruited in Cambridgeshire. He was instantly placed in command of all the Parliamentary cavalry, and the very next day led them forth to a glorious and decisive

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victory. When the sun went down on the bloody field of Naseby the star of Charles Stuart had set forever and that of Oliver Cromwell had risen.

With a heart filled with triumph and his countenance ashine with gladness, Myles Delaroche was riding alone across a portion of the field whence two hours before the last of the royalists had fled. Major Drury and the company officers had been reforming the regiment and ascertaining the losses it had sustained while their colonel with the other regimental commanders was engaged in a conference at the headquarters of Lord General Fairfax. As yet none knew the full extent of the Puritan victory, for prisoners were still pouring in, and cavalry was still pursuing the enemy's broken forces; but more than half of the royal army had been destroyed, all of its artillery and supplies had been captured, and the King himself had come near to being made a prisoner. The conference over, Myles rode toward his quarters with his whole being in a glow of happiness. Now at last fulfillment of all hopes and dreams!

Here and there on the field moved bodies of stretcher bearers, attending as well as might be to the desperate needs of the wounded or bearing them away to rude hospital quarters; and everywhere lay the dead—in places so thickly strewn that it was hard to find a way between the bodies. But to such terrible sights Myles had long been accustomed by the grim experience of war. At the moment he was thinking,

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not of the pitiable victims on the ground about him, but of the long deferred triumph of a righteous cause and the dawn of a better day for England.

Suddenly as though a pistol had been levelled at his head, he drew his horse to a halt and for a breathless moment sat staring with open mouth at the body of a Cavalier officer that lay face up and only twenty feet away. Then he sprang from his saddle and approached the fallen man. A terrible pain wrung his heart and contorted his features. Falling on his knees by the body of his friend, he wildly called his name, and, half blinded by a torrent of tears, strove to undo the clothing at throat and breast to learn whether there were any faintest beating at the heart.

It was useless—even as his first glance had told him. Arthur Hinsdale had fallen with a pistol bullet through the face, and his body was already cold in death. Myles rose to his feet and stood for a long time looking down at this sad spectacle with his thoughts far away from battles and victories. Then a voice hailed him from a little distance—a voice of grief and pain that matched his own:

“Captain! Oh, Captain Delaroche!”

Myles wheeled about and saw a group of prisoners who were being marched across the field by three or four Puritan pikemen. The man who had called was evident at once, for he had halted and turned toward Myles in such a way as to bring to a stop the whole gloomy procession. He was, as Myles at once re-

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membered, a former gamekeeper at Hinsdale Hall, one Oswald Banning, who had taken part in the ill-starred defense of the manor and been made prisoner along with Sir William and Arthur Hinsdale and Myles himself. He had gained his liberty at the same time as his master, and now was again in Puritan hands.

"Oh, Captain!" called Oswald again. "Master Arthur's killed."

"I know," answered Myles, sadly. "I have just found his body here."

"Oh, is he there?" exclaimed the prisoner, "It was to ask you to look for him that I called to you. And, oh, sir, for his mother's sake, will you not see that he has Christian burial?"

"That I will, surely," replied Myles. "I will have him borne from here, and to-morrow will do what I may."

Then addressing one of the pikemen, he ordered:

"Go with this prisoner and procure a litter. We will take this body to my tent yonder. The others may go on as before."

The line of prisoners with their captors moved forward, and Oswald and the pikeman hurried to another part of the field where they found a litter. Soon the body of Arthur was carried into the colonel's tent, and the pikeman sent to rejoin his detail. Oswald and Myles stood side by side before the litter, gazing at the face of the dead, and for long neither of them spoke.

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At last, and in a half whisper, the prisoner asked:
“What will you do, may I ask, sir, about his burial to-morrow?”

“Oh!” said Myles, after a moment, “I will find some quiet spot, away from the field, where a grave may be made, and I will have the chaplain in attendance for the burial.”

“The chaplain!” echoed Oswald, distressfully, “he would not be a clergyman, would he, now?”

“Not what you call a clergyman, I suppose. Yet I believe him to be a good and an earnest man.”

“Oh, sir!” cried Oswald, and now the tears poured down his cheeks, “it’s of his mother I’m thinking and of Sir William too. I know full well they would prefer that Master Arthur be buried without minister of any sort if it may not be a clergyman like Doctor Worcester who christened him and confirmed him like all the other Hinsdales. Come, sir, you were his friend, if you *are* a Parliament man. Cannot you and I carry out poor Master Arthur by ourselves and bury him where none of those who hated him are looking on? I’m sure, sir, he’d rest more peacefully.”

Myles did not reply, but for a time stood looking fixedly at the body of his friend. Then, moving quickly out of the tent, he called to a soldier and sent him to the supply wagons to procure a shovel and mattock. When these tools arrived the colonel laid them across the litter bars and signed to Oswald to take up the farther end. Stooping at the same

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time as the forester, he took up the head of the bier and the two with their burden passed out of the tent and through the crowded and disordered camp ground.

For a quarter of a mile they walked without pause, and when they lowered the litter to the ground, the camp ground and the battle field lay behind them.

They were at the entrance of a grassy valley where scattered oaks shaded the green turf, and a little stream wandered among musk roses and the foliage of daffodils—a lovely pastured glade like hundreds scattered through the countryside that after years of civil strife still spoke of peace and quietness.

Stooping again to the litter bars, Myles led the way for a furlong up the valley and paused beneath the spreading branches of an ancient tree.

“This would be a fitting spot, would it not, Oswald?” he asked.

“Aye, sir, a quiet and pretty spot as one might wish; and we may know it again by the tree which is the largest hereabouts.”

“Then let us make haste,” said Myles, “for ’twill soon be night.”

Taking up the mattock, he marked out a space near the edge of the shadow cast by the branches and where the turf was thickly strewn with woodland flowers. Oswald seized the shovel, and without more words, the two cut through the sod and roots and threw out the mellow earth till they judged the ex-

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cavation sufficiently wide and deep for a soldier's resting place. Then tenderly lifting the body from the litter, they placed it in the grave and covered it from view.

When the mound had been raised and the turf replaced, the old forester in a piteous tone again addressed his companion:

"Oh, sir, for his mother's sake, might I not say the burial service over Master Arthur's grave? He was a good lad always to us poor men, he was, sir; and now 'twould ease me greatly to know he had Christian burial so far as might be in these terrible times."

"Can you say the burial service?" asked Myles gravely.

"Aye, that I can, sir. I was precentor in Hinsdale Church for twenty years; and so many times I've heard the burial service as Doctor Worcester read it that I can say it like a lesson, sir. Do but give me leave to try."

"Go on, Oswald," was the reply, "if 'twill ease your mind. 'Tis forbidden, I know, by our worthy governors; but perhaps even they have not all wisdom."

So, standing by the mound with bared head and folded arms, the Puritan colonel listened while the old Hinsdale retainer recited the profound and beautiful lines to the sound of which the bodies of his countrymen for many generations past had been laid

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in the dust. The forester had a deep and resonant voice, and he spoke with utter earnestness. Like the music of a great funeral march, the cadences rolled forth on the evening air. The words seemed to fill the wide spaces about them as the rolling chords of the organ fill the cathedral nave and transept. In another sense, they seemed akin to the sounds of the wind in the branches overhead or of the brook that murmured over mossy stones—as if it were the voice of Nature herself that uttered them.

In that moment, more clearly than ever before, Myles Delaroche understood the response of so many thousands of the sons of England to the rallying cry of Church and King. And he saw that no peace would be durable, on whatever victories founded, if those who triumphed sought to impose their sway upon the nation and to forbid all forms of worship save their own. Engrossed in such thoughts as these, rather than in the actual words of the service, he was unmindful of what went on about him until Oswald, in the midst of a long, sonorous passage, hesitated and stopped. The old forester was gazing up the valley, and alarm was plainly written on his countenance. When, after a moment, he did not resume his recital, Myles faced about to see what had startled him.

Fifty paces away stood three Puritan officers who had come down unheard through the darkening valley and had halted at the sight of Myles and his com-

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panion under the oak tree. One, a heavily built man of middle age, with a heavy sword and pistols at his belt, stood a little nearer than his comrades and seemed to listen eagerly. It was already too dark to distinguish faces; but Myles from the first glance had little doubt of this officer's identity. He was the same who had arrested him in the cellars of Hinsdale, and who had virtually condemned him to death for treason to the Puritan cause. Turning back to the trembling forester, Myles said in a low voice:

"Go on—to the end."

Brokenly, Oswald resumed his recitation. Myles looked straight before him at the blackening hillside. A moment later the service was concluded, and both Myles and Oswald turned toward Cromwell who now strode rapidly toward them.

"Who is this that recites from the Prayer Book?" the general called out roughly when he had covered half the distance.

"He is a prisoner, sir," answered Myles. "He and I have just buried his master who was a friend of mine and who met his death to-day."

"And know you not, Colonel Delaroche, that the use of the Prayer Book is forbidden?"

"Aye, sir, but the man whom we buried was of the King's army; and I gave permission in this instance for the saying of the burial service."

"You gave permission, forsooth! You take too much upon yourself, sir. It seems we have fought

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to little purpose if this mummary is to be recited within half a mile of our camp. And I will tell you, Colonel Delaroche, that had I not seen myself with what will you fought this day, I might be influenced by such a happening as this to believe you had but little heart for the true cause and a purified worship."

There was a moment's silence; then Cromwell went on still more roughly:

"Pray tell me, who was this Malignant whom you name friend, and who must thus be honored?"

"Captain Arthur Hinsdale."

For half a minute Cromwell stared fixedly at his subordinate. Myles steadily returned his gaze, but made no further reply. Then suddenly the general turned upon his heel and walked away. Rejoining his companions, he turned back up the valley by the way he had come. When they had disappeared, Myles and the old forester took up the empty litter and the tools and made their way back to the camp ground.

CHAPTER XX

THE AGREEMENT OF THE PEOPLE

AFTER Naseby events moved rapidly toward the downfall of the monarchy. One by one the armies of the King were beaten and scattered, and by the end of the year he held only a few fortified places and the authority of the Parliament was acknowledged in nearly every county of England. At Stow in the following March, Myles Delaroche took part in the last pitched battle of the war; and a few weeks later King Charles fled from Oxford and surrendered to the Scots at Newark. After weary months of negotiation, the royal prisoner was delivered to the agents of the Parliament, and the Scottish army recrossed the border.

Any durable settlement of the kingdom's affairs seemed yet far away. The patriots were already divided into several parties, each with its own solution for the tremendous problems that confronted the nation. Whole-hearted republicans like Myles Delaroche disputed vainly with those who had, as they conceived it, borne arms not against the principle of monarchy but only against some extravagances and perversions of the kingly power, and who would have

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been glad to see King Charles reestablished after he had signed some charter or other provision against further misdoings. Parliament was extravagant in its demands, but timid and hesitant in enforcing them, because the views of its majority were not in harmony with those of the leaders of the army. And these leaders in turn began to realize the limits of their authority and the dangers of overstepping them. In many regiments the soldiers of the rank and file were no longer content to be represented by their officers: they had formed Soldiers' Committees and elected Agitators who shrilly voiced their demands for arrears of pay and for a greater share in the government.

One autumn day, something over two years after Naseby, the man who served as orderly at the quarters of Colonel Delaroche at Putney announced that three of the soldiers were without the door and that they requested speech with the Colonel immediately. Myles gave orders for their admittance, thinking to see another of the many committees with whom he had dealt of late in reference to pay and privileges. He was surprised, therefore, to find when they entered that only one of the trio belonged to his regiment. The others were of the infantry, and he could not recall ever having seen them before. Emmons, a veteran of Belford Troop, whom the colonel remembered as a leader in psalm singing and field preaching as well as a terrific swordsman whenever the battle was

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joined, introduced the others as Privates Smithson and Belknap of Lilburne's regiment and lost no time in making known their errand.

"We made bold to come to you, sir," he said, "for help in a matter wherein you *can* help us better than any man we know. We are drawing up a paper, sir, that states the wishes of the army, and as we think of the people of the country, touching upon a settlement of the country's affairs. We have called it the Agreement of the People, and we hope 'twill prove to be that when 'tis circulated among them, for surely what we propose will assure to them the results of all our marching and fighting and the many lives of good men that have been lost. Yet we are not entirely agreed among ourselves as to some of the things it is to contain, and we sorely lack the services of a gentleman like yourself, sir. You are a scholar, which none of us are, and you can set forth this paper in fitting language."

"How do you propose to put such an instrument into effect?" asked the colonel. "Do you hope to have it agreed upon by Parliament?"

"Maybe the Parliament," answered Belknap, quickly, "but the Army and the people first of all. When 'tis adopted by our Army Council it will be printed in thousands and carried all over England for the people to hear and act upon—that is, all those who have been against the usurper, Charles Stuart. As for others, they must take what's given them."

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"We come to you, Colonel Delaroche," resumed Emmons, "because I knew you well as one who'd gladly see both king and lords done away with once for all. You've made no secret of that, sir; and so we've thought you'd be the one best fitted to assist us in this. Indeed, 'tis king and lords that have ridden on the backs of the people from old time, and this paper means to do away with them."

"What will you do with the King?" asked Myles, gravely.

"Cut off his head," shouted Belknap. "He is the Man of Blood who has brought all these miseries on England, and should be made to suffer for his crimes."

"No! No!" cried both his comrades at once.

"'Tis a question we have yet to settle," said Emmons.

"If that be the plan," declared Smithson, "I for one, as I said before, will have naught to do with it. Peace is not to be gained by the shedding of more blood. And if you talk of vengeance, tell me, will you, who it was that said "Vengeance is mine?"

"We shall have no lasting peace in England," persisted Belknap, "till that arch traitor is dead. Day after day he frames plots and lies for our undoing. He promises the Scots one thing and the Irish another, and ourselves a wholly different thing. No two of these promises could possibly be kept. He makes them only to divide us among ourselves and so himself come back to power. 'Tis known what his let-

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ters were that we took on the field of Naseby; and since that time it is the same. And all the while he plots with France for the sending of an army to crush us down and set him on the throne again. All this while he is a prisoner at Holmby House and elsewhere. Should we be weak enough to let him go, what would he do against us in France or Holland? General Cromwell, who all the summer has tried to deal with him to the end of some kind of settlement, has turned utterly against him at last; and, depend upon it, we shall finally have *his* word for ending it as it should be ended."

"If such be your intentions," said Myles, "I surely cannot work with you. I believe 'twould be both folly and crime to do violence on the King. 'Twould make of him a martyr in the eyes of all those who have supported him; and those are nearly half the kingdom. Even though we held sufficient force to carry it through, 'twould be the worst possible beginning for our new republic. The bitterness of it would last for a hundred years."

"But these are *not* our intentions," cried Emmons. "Only last night we wrestled with Belknap here for hours on this very thing. And 'twas then agreed that our paper should have no word of any such intention or so much as the name of king in it from beginning to end. What we plan is a commonwealth wherein all power shall be vested in a Parliament which shall be elected by the people."

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"*All* the people," interposed Smithson.

"Aye, all the people, gentle and simple, rich and poor. And we're to have it reserved that even the Parliament so elected shall make no laws as to matters of religion and ways of worship or for impressing any of us for war service against our wills."

"And all laws must bear on all alike," said Smithson. "Lord and laborer, money-bag and mendicant—one law for all and no exemption."

"Why!" cried Myles, "I'd gladly work with you or any others for such a cause. Master Belknap, is it so you understand the paper is to be drawn?"

"Aye, sir," was the surly response. "We were agreed well enough as to these things. But you did ask me what was to be done with the King; and I gave my opinion of what should be done *and will be*. As for the rest of it, I'm with them heartily. And, as they say, we agreed that the name of king was not to appear at all in this paper."

"One more question," said Myles, "Is it the thought of your group that if the paper it is proposed to draw along these lines be not accepted by the Army Council or by the Parliament, 'twill then be in order to take up arms to enforce its acceptance?"

The Agitators were silent for a moment while each looked to the other for a reply. At last Emmons spoke—rather slowly and hesitantly:

"It was our thought, sir, that we could make a paper so much in accordance with the will of the army—and

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the country—that 'twould gain general approval. If it do not, I for one would not favor imposing it by violence."

"Then, on that understanding, I will work with you," said the Colonel, "for I believe even a free government should be based on the will of those who are governed. And now, if you like, we'll sit and discuss these drafts you have. It may be we can come to agreement among ourselves; and if so we'll call in others who may speak for other regiments."

For the rest of the day the four labored diligently at the framing and revising of the articles. By night a copy had been produced to which all appended their names, and a further meeting had been arranged for the following day which would be attended by Sexby and Rainborough, two other Agitators who for some weeks had been endeavoring to produce a paper of like import.

A week later the Council of the Army met in the church at Putney to discuss the demands of the Agitators and a series of bitter complaints that they had lodged against the Parliament then sitting.

The Parliament, so the soldiers' representatives alleged, had broken its agreements with them on no less than ten different points; and these grievances must be redressed. Defenders of the Parliament had retorted that the Army was even more lax in keeping the engagements it had made and that when these were once

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fulfilled, peace would be restored and the legislature would be able to satisfy all just demands.

Myles Delaroche was present as the representative of the men of his regiment. Sexby, Smithson and Rainborough were there to speak for the Agitators, and General Frederic Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, and Sir Hardress Waller for the more conservative reformers. In the absence of Lord Fairfax, General Cromwell presided.

Since Naseby the power and prestige of Cromwell had steadily increased. Victorious in every battle where he had held command, he had acquired such ascendancy in the New Model Army as even Fairfax, its nominal leader, had never achieved. In the Parliament and in other state councils he was equally successful. Clearheaded, logical, determined, and gifted at times with a fiery and compelling eloquence, he over and again shaped matters of legislation or of governmental policy in accordance with his will and in defiance of seeming majorities. Colonel Delaroche, who had become a close student of national affairs, lost no opportunity when in London for sitting as a listener to the debates at Westminster; and he had more than once reluctantly acknowledged that Cromwell most often prevailed because he had right and reason on his side—because he saw more deeply than most of his associates into the tangled mazes of policy. In those days few men of observant turn doubted Cromwell's further rise to power and place. Even then, one of

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the many factions into which the army was divided talked of pulling down Charles Stuart and placing Oliver Cromwell on the throne.

Recalling Cromwell's words in many Parliamentary discussions and those of both Cromwell and Ireton in previous meetings of the Army Council, Myles had no doubt that the whole tenor of the Agreement of the People would be utterly distasteful to both of them and was convinced that they would use every effort to prevent its adoption. He knew well the character of Ireton's thought on these matters. A fervid patriot and a sincere reformer along conservative lines, Ireton would to the last cling to the ancient constitution of England that embodied institutions which had been a thousand years in the making, and would look upon the revolutionary proposals of the Agreement as leading to certain anarchy. Yet both Cromwell and Ireton looked with horror upon the prospect of a division in the army with its almost certain consequence of civil war. Many times already they had pleaded for moderation in the Army Council and for an attitude of patience toward what the soldiers deemed the dilatory and half-hearted policies of Parliament. It was very soon evident that they would take a similar position with regard to the burning question of the Agreement, and if they failed to impress their views on the assembly, would endeavor to postpone any decision till the men should be in a different frame of mind.

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“The expressions in your constitution,” said Cromwell to the assembled warriors, “are very plausible, and if we could jump clean out of one sort of government into another, it is just possible there would not be much dispute. But is this jump so easy? How do we know that other people may not put together a constitution as plausible as yours? And even if this were the only plan proposed, you must consider not only its consequences, but the ways and means of accomplishing it. According to reason and judgment, are the spirits and temper of the nation prepared to receive and go along with it? Give me leave to say this: there will be very great mountains in the way of this. It is not enough to propose things that are good in the end: it is our duty to consider consequences. And now let us proceed to consider the engagements and agreements which the army has already made. When those are fully known and disposed of it will be open to any one who wishes to tender anything for the good of the public.”

The instant Cromwell concluded one of the Agitators leaped to his feet.

“This is merely a plan to put us from our purpose,” he shouted. “We are met to consider this Agreement of the People. This we believe to be the will of the people of England, and if that be so, what care need we have as to any prior engagements or agreements?”

“Is it not the very pith of your complaint against

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the Parliament," asked Ireton, "that in ten different particulars it has violated agreements?"

The Agitator replied angrily, and the dispute soon became general. Two or three men were shouting at once and shaking brawny fists to emphasize their words. Finally Cromwell's determined pounding of the gavel brought silence.

"Let us appoint a committee," he said, "to examine into these former engagements. So may God unite us in one heart and mind. I had rather we should devolve our strength to you than that the kingdom for our division should suffer loss; for that's in all our hearts to profess, above anything that's worldly, the public good of the people."

"Let us have no more committees and no more delays," cried another Agitator, "lest while we thus debate and consider the Parliament may come before us by patching up some peace with the King to the detriment of the natural rights of the people."

"We must keep our contracts," answered Ireton hotly, "for all these natural rights you talk of depend on contracts rightly kept, else no man would know what was his own."

"Well, then," said Captain Audley, "if we tarry too long in debating these natural rights, the King will come and say which of us shall be hanged first."

"Let us then consider of this paper, if that be your will," said Cromwell.

A chorus of ayes left no doubt as to the wish of the

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assembly, and the general reluctantly took up the copy of the Agreement that lay on his desk.

When the article which provided for the election of a new Parliament had been read, Ireton asked whether it meant that the members were to be elected by the equal votes of all the people or whether the old suffrage instituted by the constitution that was before the Norman Conquest was to prevail.

“Manhood suffrage!” cried Rainborough. “I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as well as the greatest he; and therefore, truly, sir, I think it clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government.”

“Now you speak again of natural right,” declared Ireton. “But voting is not a right conferred by Nature. It is a *civil* right because it is granted or withheld by the State. No one ought to have a vote in this kingdom who has not a permanent, fixed interest in the kingdom, that is, the persons who hold the titles to the land and those in corporations in whom all trading lies.”

“But see how it now is,” urged Rainborough, passionately. “A gentleman lives in the country and hath three or four lordships. When a Parliament is called, he must be a Parliament man. And what chance has a poor man against him? I find nothing in the law of God that a lord shall choose twenty burgesses and a gentleman only two and a poor man none.

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Why was a poor man given reason if he were not to use it?"

A tumult of voices in assertion and denial filled the room. Poor men were at last being heard on the constitution of the nation; and their voices were loud rather than clear. Demands for equal justice for rich and poor—for noble and commoner—were mingled with fierce threats of vengeance on personal enemies and cries for the blood of tyrants. Charges and counter charges were hurled back and forth, and more than one disputant offered to sustain his opinions at the point of the sword. At last the moderator succeeded in quelling the uproar sufficiently to make himself heard. "Let us confer in a manner more seemly," he pleaded, "and choose words in speaking that savor not so much of ill-will. Why can we not avoid such vast questions as this and content ourselves with discussing how far our existing franchise may safely be enlarged? Might it not be well, for instance, to admit to the vote those who hold lands by lease as well as freeholders?"

Yells of derision from some of the rear benches greeted this paltering compromise. In the midst of these Myles Delaroche slowly rose to his feet.

"Men of England," he said in a deep, tense voice that instantly made itself heard in every quarter of the room, "we are met to decide a question upon which, more than any other, depends the future welfare of our country. We have fought a long and

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bitter war because our ancient rights were trampled on by the King; and if we falter now that the victory is won, then our children after us or the Englishmen of future generations may be obliged to take up pike and sword in the same cause and again to dye the soil of England with the blood of her people. King Charles and his ministers have trampled on the provisions of the Great Charter. They have taxed the nation unlawfully, set up their own courts to do their will and imprisoned and put to death those who dared oppose them. And so, I tell you, will other kings and other ministers do in times to come unless here and now we put such tyranny beyond their power. Think you Charles Stuart would ever have dared his usurpations had he been opposed by a Parliament which represented the whole people, by officers of their choosing and an army that answered to their will? It is the meaning of this instrument that the people of the land are the source of government and that a just government derives its power from their consent. And the people are somewhat more than freeholders or copyholders or the heads of trading corporations. They are those who till the soil—those who dig and weave and forge and build—aye, and those who offer their lives on the battlefield—as well as those who sit in counting houses and those who spend the rent moneys drawn from the poor.

“General Ireton talks of civil right. I tell you the civil rights and the property he is so anxious to guard

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are made valuable by the faithfulness of common men; and they will be safest when the rights of common men are best protected.

“If you say to me that the rights of the people will be safeguarded by wise and honest men who are chosen by a select body of voters who have permanent, fixed interests in the country, I will answer that no man’s interests are well served save by agents who are responsible to him—that when the people’s representatives rule the land the government will be administered in the people’s interest, *and that it never will be otherwise.* I move the adoption of this provision in the sense that every freeman of England shall have an equal vote in the election of his representatives.”

A roar of applause greeted Myles’ conclusion. Cromwell, with no attempt to conceal his impatience, turned away to speak with Ireton whose chair was near the moderator’s desk. But the shouts and cheers continued. Two or three cried seconds to the motion, and presently shouts of “Vote! Vote!” made themselves heard.

Cromwell reascended the rostrum and rapped long and loud.

“Shall we appoint tellers to collect ballots on this question?” he asked at length.

“No! No!” came several replies, “vote by voice.”

“Well, then, I will ask for the ayes on the motion of Colonel Delaroche.”

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A louder roar than before came in reply. With a wry smile Cromwell turned again to Ireton.

"Shall I call for the nays?" he said.

"No," answered Ireton, "we will concede it as the vote of this gathering."

By this time the day was far advanced, and it became evident that a consideration of the proposed constitution, item by item, by the whole body would be impracticable. Therefore, a committee was appointed for the further consideration of the Agreement of the People or of such other paper as they might recommend as the basis of a settlement.

Cromwell's concluding speech was in a far different tone from that of many former declarations on the government of England. Only a fortnight before he had told the House of Commons that it was imperative that the authority of the monarchy be restored. Now he said:

"If we were free to do as we please, we would set up neither king nor lords. Further, we would not keep either king or lords if to do so is a danger to the public interest. Is it a danger? Some think so, others think not. For my own part, I concur with those who believe there can be no safety with a king and lords *and even with those who think that God will probably destroy them.*"

CHAPTER XXI

THE HEADSMAN OF WHITEHALL

THE Agreement of the People was not to become the fundamental law of England. The committee appointed by the Army Council for further consideration of the proposed constitution included both Sexby and Rainborough, but had such a majority of conservatives that the paper which was finally proposed as an address to Parliament was more nearly in accordance with the views of Ireton than with those of the Agitators. It was in effect merely another attempt to reach a compromise with the King. Not satisfied with this, the Levellers, as the party of the Agitators began to be called, made a move to have the Agreement considered at a rendezvous of the entire army. Cromwell was able to prevent this; but two weeks later when a muster was held on Corkbush Field many of the officers and soldiers appeared with copies of the Agreement stuck in their hats in token of their support of the Levellers' demands.

Myles Delaroche, on the ground that the Agreement must win by its appeal to reason and not by force, had refused to take part in this movement; but hundreds of minor officers and thousands of the men

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had no such scruples. They fully intended to carry their point by a display of armed power, to overawe their commanders and bring military pressure to bear on the Parliament.

On the other hand, the power of Cromwell had increased tremendously in the week just past. The King had made a determined attempt to escape to France, and this had been defeated by the watchfulness of Cromwell's agents and by his own prompt action in preventing the sailing of the selected vessel. When these facts became known in the army there was a strong reaction in favor of the leader whose genius had won the victory for the patriot cause, and who now seemed the only one with sufficient resolution and readiness to prevent its fruits being snatched from their hands. So utterly were the fighting men divided on these and other issues that no one knew the real sentiments of the army as a whole or could prophesy its conduct even for a day.

The outcome was that in only one regiment did the soldiers refuse to obey the generals' command to remove the offending papers from their hats. In this crisis Cromwell acted with characteristic courage and determination. Drawing his sword, he dashed into the midst of the ranks and threatened to slash off the head of any man who disobeyed. It was a perilous moment, for the mutineers might easily have cut him down; but the habits of discipline and the latent respect in the most unruly minds for such a daunt-

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less leader prevailed at last. Tearing the proclamations from their hats, the soldiers begged for mercy. This was granted to all save three, who were condemned to death as ringleaders. These three, however, were allowed to throw dice for their lives; and the loser was immediately shot in the presence of his comrades. Thus ended the first serious effort to establish a democracy among English-speaking people.

The belief of the soldiers of the New Model Army that Cromwell was their natural leader was soon confirmed by events. Scotland refused to acquiesce in the acts of the Parliament and reasserted the sovereignty of the King. At the same time the royal standard was raised again in Wales and several of the northern English counties wavered in their allegiance. The Parliament was desperately short of funds; there were disaffected districts in the very neighborhood of London, and murmurs both loud and deep in the capital itself. Not for years had the outlook been so gloomy. But Cromwell put himself at the head of a small body of troops and rode away to take command of the Parliamentary army in Wales. The men were but poorly equipped, for supplies of all sorts were scanty. Their leader trusted to victory to justify his course, and again his confidence proved well founded. In a fierce campaign of only a few weeks' duration he broke down all resistance and raised the banners of Parliament over Pembroke Castle, the last royal stronghold.

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But there was to be no respite for the followers of Ironsides. The Duke of Hamilton, at the head of a Scottish army of ten thousand men, had already crossed the border, and, with his force augmented every day by hundreds of northern royalists, was marching straight toward London. Cromwell must throw himself in his path or the capital would be taken and the war utterly lost. In this desperate juncture there could be no mercy on the soldiers. The march to the north was made under terrific difficulties. Half of the infantrymen were barefoot before it was concluded, and the roads from Wales to Yorkshire were strewn with discarded burdens and with the human derelicts of war. For three days together Myles Delaroche and all his troopers marched behind their horses each of which carried two of the infantrymen who had fallen exhausted by the roadside. But for this expedient of the young cavalry colonel, all of these men must have been lost to the army.

At last they faced the royalists at Preston. With the eager recruits from the former armies of the King, Hamilton's force was more than double that with which he had crossed the border, and Cromwell's ragged veterans were outnumbered nearly three to one. Yet there was no hesitation in the Puritan ranks or in the mind of the commander. For three days the battle raged in the woods and fields about Preston and at the bridges and fords of the Ribble. Colonel Delaroche was twice wounded, but continued at the head

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of his regiment until he fell from his horse and was borne away by his men to the shelter of a woodman's cottage. When the struggle ended all the forces that had marched under the royal banners were scattered or destroyed and their leader was a prisoner in Cromwell's hands. Another crisis had been met and another victory won against seemingly hopeless odds.

Myles lay at Preston for nearly two months while Cromwell and his lieutenants completed the work begun on that famous field. When in the autumn the young colonel rejoined his regiment the revolt had been thoroughly crushed, and he was sent by General Fairfax to rest and more thoroughly recover at his home in Shropshire.

John Delaroche was also at Grimsby, having resigned his captaincy at the close of the summer's campaign. He had already wooed and won the daughter of a neighboring squire, and it was agreed that they were to wed and to sail for America as soon as the country's affairs were so far advanced toward settlement as to make it unlikely that John's services would again be needed in the army. The brothers, meanwhile, worked happily together for the further improvement of the old estate. As Myles' health and strength returned, he found his interest undiminished in the increase of their flocks and herds and the care of the timberlands. War and bloodshed were for the time forgotten, and the family councils around

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the old oaken dining table on the development of Grimsby lands were almost joyous occasions.

Sir Anton Delaroche was in better health than he had been ten years before. The triumph of the Puritan cause had been as meat and drink to him, and he never tired of prophesying better days for England as soon as any tolerable settlement should be effected.

Mistress Delaroche was still of stately carriage and vigorous habit, although the years of anxiety while both her sons were with the army had deepened the lines of care, and somewhat sharpened the features of her handsome countenance. Now that the fighting was over, she counted on happier days. She began to sing again as she moved about the house, working and planning for the future of her children. And now her best efforts were concentrated on persuading her elder son to abandon the thought of returning to America.

In this, as Myles soon discerned, Mistress Delaroche had the silent coöperation of Elizabeth Meldrum, John's fiancée, who spent many days at Grimsby. But John was of the sort not easily turned aside from a purpose he had held for years, and he returned decided negatives to all suggestions looking toward the sale or abandonment of Cedricswold.

"There's a land for the future," he declared. "A vast and wonderful land in which in due time shall be

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another England, perhaps greater than this. And there I'd willingly see my family planted to have a share in its upgrowing."

"Aye, and a share in fighting bears and wild men and terrible serpents," answered his mother with a shiver. "John, is it true that snakes are there to be seen with bodies like the cable of a ship?"

"Nay, never in New England," laughed John. "The winters there are far too cold to foster huge reptiles. In the Floridas, maybe, which are a thousand miles southward, such things may be seen, though for myself I doubt whether they be more than mariner's tales."

"I've heard that the wild men there do eat of the flesh of people," said Elizabeth.

"Nay, nay," laughed John again. "They're fierce enough in war, as all know that have met them, but no man-eaters."

"Hold!" cried Sir Anton, suddenly rising and peering from the window. "Here is one who rides at speed from Belford. It may be he has news from London. Oh, aye, 'tis John o' Barker's Mill. He'll have some word for us."

The rider meanwhile had turned from the main road and come up the pathway toward the house, but he had not slackened speed and seemed minded to ride at full gallop to the very doorstone. Sir Anton stepped without to meet him, and the others stood looking forth from the open door.

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John o' Barker's drew rein violently, his horse's hoofs throwing the gravel in all directions.

"They're trying the King in London!" he shouted. "They've named him traitor and murderer and will put him to the death."

"Is't the Parliament?" demanded Sir Anton.

"Aye, the Parliament, or what's left of it now that Cromwell aud his soldiers have had their will of it and turned out all who would not act with them. A rider just came in at the village. 'Tis thought this means another rising."

"Do the Lords concur in it?" asked Myles.

"Nay, they'd have naught to do with it. 'Tis a High Court that the Parliament has made of a hundred or more, and every man picked to hang the King or cut off his head."

"How long have they been sitting?"

"'Twas two days before Jeremy Tunstall rode out of London. They may have ended ere this and passed their sentence."

"Father," said Myles, turning to the old baronet, "I must to London at once."

"Oh! and what will you do?" cried Sir Anton. "'Tis folly and madness that they do, but one man cannot check them."

"Myles!" cried his mother, "stay here where we live in peace. You've ridden and fought for years in this cause and come near to death on the field. And

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'tis as your father says. You can do naught to check them."

"Nay, I can try at the least," answered Myles sadly. "This is madness and crime at once, and I very much fear will end in destroying all that which we have gained. But not all our leaders have the blood madness. Surely some will listen to reason even now."

John o' Barker's wheeled about to carry his news farther, and John Delaroche took up the argument with Myles.

"You'll risk your life and liberty for naught," he declared. "There's Harrison and Goffe and Cromwell—they're in the saddle now, since Preston. They'll be the death of the King—I see it now—and also of any that say them nay."

"Nevertheless, I must go," answered Myles firmly. "And at once, for there's three or four hours of daylight left, and I can ride a dozen leagues. I will guard myself as best I may, but I cannot remain quiet while such a deed is done. Wilt tell William, John, to make ready my horse while I find furnishing?"

He would listen to no further remonstrances, and ten minutes later had said his good-bys and was riding toward the Shrewsbury road. The air was warm with a three days' thaw, and the way was deep with a soft and clinging mud. Patches of dingy snow lay here and there in the lowlands and wherever the way was sheltered by forest trees. In spite of Myles' im-

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patience his progress was but slow, for his steed went over fetlocks at nearly every step. That night he lay at Brixton which is only twenty miles from Grimsby.

Before daybreak next morning he was up and away, spurring through muddy hollows, skirting the deeper pools wherein his horse might have sunken utterly, and fording tumbling streams; but although he rode for twelve hours and more, he covered scarcely more distance than one might have made in three at a more favorable season. So it was for most of the way to London. Twice he changed horses for better speed, and he gave no thought to his own weariness; but seven long days had passed ere he reached the city and halted at the little inn in the Strand where he was accustomed to lodge.

There he learned that he was too late. Charles Stuart had been condemned as tyrant, traitor and murderer, and two days before had been led to the headsman's block at Whitehall. A strange and ominous silence brooded over the city like that of the worst days of a pestilence. The Londoners, who at the outbreak of the war and all through its course had formed the very heart of the opposition to a sovereign that overstepped his powers now stood aghast at this bloody and merciless act against a helpless prisoner. People went about with lowering faces or gathered in little groups in courts and alleyways, conversing in low tones on the tragedy at Whitehall and looking with

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hatred on the stern-faced pikemen who patrolled the streets.

For a long and miserable week Colonel Delaroche wandered alone about the dismal town, avoiding alike the partisans of the fallen king and those among former comrades and associates who had banded themselves together to destroy him. During those black days it seemed to Myles that all the labors and sacrifices of the war had been in vain and that the fruits of their hard-won victories were like the Dead Sea apples that turn to ashes in the mouths of those who eat them. Friends and kinsmen had slain each other only that the survivors might erect a new tyranny to fill the place of the old. From his memory flashed the bitter words of Sir William Hinsdale—"If your life is spared for ten years longer, you'll acknowledge that I was right and that your atheist lawyers and your howling sectaries were wrong. 'Tis not such as they who can administer a state." Then, resolving to free himself from any part in the vengeful deed of the regicides and any responsibility for its consequences, Myles wrote and despatched to General Cromwell his resignation as an officer in the army of the Parliament.

CHAPTER XXII

THE LEVELER

DREARY weeks passed while Myles remained without hope or plan. Those of the Puritan party who had opposed the execution of the King were in a helpless minority in the Army Council and in the remnant of Parliament that still met at Westminster. Myles conferred with Major Drury and two or three more of the moderates among the officers, and a council was held with Algernon Sidney and Sir Henry Vane, two of the Parliamentary leaders who had opposed Cromwell on the issue of the King's trial. But all such efforts were fruitless. The regicides were in the saddle, and they held the power of the sword. After an hour of discussion, with the proposal and rejection of many devices, the gathering decided that, as matters stood, resistance was both useless and dangerous.

Meanwhile those who had seized the reins of government were alert and relentless in maintaining their position and the authority of the new Commonwealth. Warrants were sent out all over the Kingdom for the arrest of Malignants, as those who persisted in their loyalty to the House of Stuart were now termed, and

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for the seizure of their property. The gallows and the ax were employed against the royalist leaders of the second civil war and freely threatened against any who befriended them. Long lists were published weekly setting forth the names of those who had been denounced as Malignants, and all the officers of the Commonwealth and all good citizens were exhorted to do their utmost to bring about their arrest and conviction.

One morning, late in April, Myles Delaroche, returning from a visit to a sick comrade, drew rein on London Bridge to read a proclamation of this sort that had been posted there. These ominous lists had all along possessed a strong appeal to his interest, though he abhorred the bloodthirsty spirit in which they were conceived, thinly veiled as it was with pious phrases; and now he scanned this latest pronouncement with mingled feelings of attraction and loathing. His glance went swiftly over the names of a score or more of threatened ones who were unknown to him or known only by report; and he had straightened up in the saddle preparatory to riding on, when suddenly his eyes fastened themselves on a paragraph in the smaller type, near the bottom of the column.

James Dalrymple [he read] late of Surrey Lane in London. Last heard from at Oxford and at Portsmouth. And Lucy Dalrymple, his daughter.

For full five minutes Myles remained immovable in

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the midst of the stream of passers-by, staring at the list, reading over and over its menacing phrases, studying the heavily printed names of the Committee at the bottom—Ireton, Bradshaw, Cromwell—and endeavoring to form some plan of action. The temper of the Puritan majority being what it was, he well knew what might be expected if the Dalrymples fell into the hands of a revolutionary tribunal. The old man could hardly be regarded as a dangerous enemy of the Commonwealth, but he was sure to declare his sentiments without restraint if placed on his defense; and the courts before which such actions were brought were in no mood to hear assertions of loyalty to the young Charles or condemnations of those who had slain his father. If James Dalrymple were arrested, he might meet the same fate as the sovereign to whom for so many years he had given heartfelt allegiance.

On the other hand, the Dalrymples might have fled from England. The reference to Portsmouth in the notice gave Myles some hope of this. He had no word of their whereabouts for two years or more, and it might be they were safe in France or Holland with the many other refugees. But his uncle had no resources outside the country, and by this time his personal fortune must have been dissipated. If they had gone, it must have been as poor companions of some more fortunate royalists, and such a course, Myles knew, would have been most reluctantly adopted. Altogether it seemed more likely that they were yet in England

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where many of the friends of more prosperous days were still in possession of their estates and able to afford them shelter.

Suddenly Myles wheeled his horse about and rode away at a sharp trot in the direction of Whitehall. There he knew that Cromwell had taken up his lodging, and, with a few associates, was already exercising an almost royal power. If an appeal were to be made from the Committee's decision, it must be made to the only man in the kingdom who had power to order a reversal. Therefore Myles determined to waste no time upon subordinates or in any form of indirect approach. Soon he was at the palace gates, demanding audience with the General.

There were none of the formalities of a court in Cromwell's surroundings—rather the bare and stern usages of a Puritan army camp. After Colonel Delaroche had waited but a short time at the main entrance, a sentry conducted him to the door of Cromwell's apartment and past the two musketeers who were stationed there.

Cromwell sat behind an oak writing table, with his hat and sword on a chair beside him and with a flintlock pistol lying, as if by accident, near his right hand. The General did not speak upon Myles' entrance, but sat with his gaze fixed piercingly on his visitor's face. In this instant of silence Myles, looking downward upon the Puritan leader, caught a glint of metal under his garments at the neck, and knew that he wore be-

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neath his shirt a coat of woven mail that might serve to deflect the sword or dagger thrust of an assassin.

"Ho!" said Cromwell, when his scrutiny had satisfied him that his visitor was indeed him whose name had been announced, "Colonel Delaroche, the Leveler."

"The Leveler, at your service," replied Myles calmly. "I have no cause to repudiate the name."

"Nay," said the other loweringly, "you were always confident enough of your opinions. But it seems I spoke too hastily just now in naming you *colonel* also. I believe you have thought fit to sever your connection with the Army of the Commonwealth."

"Yes, sir. I found myself in disagreement with some of its policies and could no longer remain a part of it."

"With *which* of its policies?" demanded Cromwell, rising from his chair and thrusting his face toward his visitor. "Do you mean the execution of justice upon that Arch Malignant, Charles Stuart?"

"I mean the execution of the King, yes, sir. Call it by what name you will."

For a moment Cromwell stood breathing hard and staring at the unflinching eyes before him. Then his shouting voice reverberated through the room and the hall without:

"I tell you, Delaroche, and all others like you—all enemies of the Commonwealth of England, whether with carnal arms in their hands or with faltering and

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double dealing in their minds and hearts—we have executed Heaven's justice on a traitor; and *we will do the like to all those who gainsay us.*"

"That I already understand to be your intention," was the firm reply, "and I am not here for the purpose of disputing with you who surely have the power in your hands."

"Then for what purpose *do* you come?" growled Cromwell, throwing himself again into his chair. "Be brief, I pray you, for my time is much demanded."

"I saw upon the list of those attainted with treason against the Commonwealth the names of James and Lucy Dalrymple, and I came to say—"

"Ho! your precious kin amongst the Malignants!" interrupted the General. "'Tis another reason your allegiance has been somewhat divided. Is it perhaps a family trait?"

"Neither James Dalrymple nor his daughter are blood kin of mine," replied Myles, who was striving to remember that he came with a petition, "but his second wife was my father's sister, and he bore himself as a generous kinsman toward me until we differed on this very matter of my allegiance to the cause of the Parliament. Since then we have been estranged; but now I could gladly see the threat of this prosecution lifted from him; and it is that I have come to ask."

"Know you not, Delaroche, that he was one of the most eager for the second war and the chance of over-

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throwing us while yet Charles Stuart lived, and that to-day he protests his loyalty to the young man, his son, who, having escaped through our negligence, now claims to be King of England?"

"I know this, sir: my uncle is an old man, far past fighting age. He is poor also, and such support as he could give the royalists would be of little account. The Commonwealth thus far has not been too merciful, and it has made for itself bitter enemies. Can you not gain for yourself and for the new government the credit justly due a wiser policy? Can you not have the names of James Dalrymple and his daughter stricken from this list?"

Cromwell made no reply in words. He merely shook his head grimly, then turned aside and reached for some of the papers on the table.

"At least then," cried Myles, "can they not be given a certain time to take themselves to France or Holland? There they will surely not constitute a danger."

"No, I tell you," shouted Cromwell, again rising and menacingly confronting his visitor. "Enough of these Malignants are abroad already, making a court for the young Stuart and besieging the French king for intervention in his behalf. And now *you*, Delaroche, that have never been more than lukewarm in the cause, and that have once and again sought to hamper those who fought and prayed and planned for a true commonwealth and a purified worship in England, get you gone, and think yourself fortunate

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if you yourself taste not the punishment that is meted out to those who oppose us. It may be I have been unduly lax in leaving such as you abroad to work and plan for our undoing. Take yourself away and quickly."

For a moment Myles stood looking steadily at the roughened and swollen countenance of the General who in his turn gave back stare for stare. Then turning on his heel, the colonel marched out of the room and through the hallway to the square without.

When he was mounted and in the open street Myles realized the disastrous failure of his mission, and began reproaching himself for the manner in which he had conducted his part of the interview and indeed for appearing at all before Cromwell. He should have known, he told himself, that a negotiation as difficult as this was not to be successfully conducted by one whom the General had occasion to remember with acute dislike. Here was a matter in which direct methods were not well adapted to achieve success. To Myles it was now bitterly plain that he should have found some one who could intercede with Cromwell, or with some other of the group now in power, without rousing feelings of antagonism before his message was heard at all. With these thoughts in mind, Myles recalled the favor with which his brother was regarded by General Fairfax, who the previous summer had promised him a major's commission if he would remain in the service. The more he reflected upon this

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the more Myles was persuaded that John would have little difficulty in securing Fairfax's intercession in behalf of the Dalrymples. So he resolved to start the next morning for Grimsby and induce his brother to come to London on this errand.

He had ridden half way to his lodgings when a thought came to him that made him first draw rein for a moment's consideration, then turn aside down a side street that led toward the western suburbs. Recalling the last words addressed to him by Cromwell, and the Puritan leader's hostile manner during the whole of the interview just past, it seemed to Myles more than likely that a warrant for his own arrest would be speedily forthcoming, and that a squad of musketeers might soon be sent to his lodgings to take him into custody. As a prisoner he would be helpless to aid his kinsfolk or to secure for them any aid from others. So, as much on the Dalrymples' account as his own, Myles determined to avoid the danger of immediate arrest. He spurred his mount to a canter and soon was free of the streets of the town. An hour after the conclusion of the scene at Whitehall, he had passed Harrison's Inn at Chesney on his way to the West.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WIZARD OF BENLOW

MYLES lost no time on the road. His horse was fresh and the traveling far easier than it had been three months before, so that a steady trot or a canter was not difficult on the level stretches. It was just such a day as that one nine years before when he had traversed this very way on foot and had viewed the same fields and hedges and the same blooming orchards of cherry and peach in all their springtide glory. Now, as then, the soft breezes of April stirred the lush new grass by the wayside, sang among the tiny pink leaflets of the orchard boughs and bore to the passing traveler fragrant promises of the harvest to come.

This countryside had been but lightly touched by the war. Trees and fences were not bullet scarred; no hideous gashes in the sunny fields marked the sites of homesteads destroyed by cannon or the torch, and the old bridges of timber or of stone still spanned the quiet streams. Milkmaids drove their flocks afield and plowmen followed their slow-moving teams in seeming indifference to the fate of Parliaments and Kings. To Myles Delaroche the whole scene had the air of

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having changed not at all since that well-remembered day that followed the bout with Hinsdale at the fencing school and the quarrel with the King's Registrar.

But Myles had within himself that which was better evidence of the passage of the years than anything his eyes and ears might tell. A few weeks before he had marked his twenty-ninth birthday, but he felt at least a score of years older than the happy lad who had trudged along these pathways and who had vied with gay Arthur Hinsdale in carefree song and story. He had fought through all the campaigns of a long and bloody war; he had known hunger and wounds and the black discouragement of oft repeated failure. But defeat when it seemed most certain and overwhelming had not brought the bitterness that came with victory. Naseby had been fought and won and Preston, with thousands of brave men slain—and England was not free. They had overthrown Charles Stuart only to raise up in his place Oliver Cromwell and his sectaries; and after seven years of war the people of England seemed not a whit nearer to their age-long goal.

Now he passed the spot where Hinsdale had overtaken him and had besought as a favor Myles' riding of his led horse. A flood of memories of Arthur and the old happy days rushed over him, mingled with the keenest realization he had yet known that they were forever departed. 'Arthur's mortal frame lay in the little pastured valley near Naseby field; hundreds of

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others whom Myles had known and loved, and who had fought on one or the other side in the great conflict had suffered a like fate; and he himself was a fugitive from those who had been his leaders and comrades. Sir William Hinsdale lay half crippled with wounds in the cottage at Hinsdale Village where his wife had found refuge, the stern retribution of the Commonwealth for his share in the second civil war being withheld only because of his utter helplessness. And James Dalrymple and Lucy, who in the old days had worked and planned so eagerly for Myles' advancement, were now living in poverty in some foreign land or as hunted criminals in their own, facing the prospect of military courts and prisons.

Myles rode past Heatherington Park in the late afternoon, and at nightfall drew rein at the little Bartley inn where he and Arthur had lodged after the affair with the gamblers at Heatherington Fete. He passed a restless and dream-ridden night, and at daylight was again in the saddle. The morning was dark and lowering, with a chill wind out of the east, and Myles urged his mount forward persistently, hoping to ride twenty or thirty miles before the rain overtook him and drove him to shelter.

By mid forenoon he had emerged on Benlow Heath and crossed the timber bridge over a swift flowing stream two miles from Benlow Village. Just below the bridge the river broadened and deepened to a pond a stone's throw wide, fringed on the one side

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by a row of nodding flags and on the other by drooping willow trees. The water was deep and treacherous there. The mournful branches stretched far out over black and whirling pools that grasped and drowned each floating tuft or weed, while near the bank the withered sedges seemed to reach up clutching hands.

All the morning Myles had been riding in a mood of deepest depression, and now as he passed this melancholy spot, that seemed to be shunned by beast and bird alike, a momentary shudder passed over him like that which shakes the frame of one who treads accursed or pestilential ground. While he was chiding himself angrily for this weakness, he heard shouts and shrill cries and looked up to see on the road a quarter of a mile away a moblike gathering of men and boys that surrounded and followed a smaller group of five or six men who marched slowly toward him.

In wonderment as to the meaning of this noisy rout so far from the village, Myles sat more erectly in his saddle and rode forward at a walk to meet the assemblage. As he approached, it gradually became clear that the central figure of the smaller group was an old man with flowing white hair who walked as a prisoner under guard with his hands tied together before him. On either side marched tall constables with their wooden truncheons in their hands, their faces expressive of the stern dignity befitting their office as guardians of the public peace. Just behind them

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and closely following the prisoner, came two men whom Myles instantly identified as magistrate and minister. The justice, a hard-faced man of middle age, wore a solemn suit of black with a heavy chain and seal, and the preacher was clad in the unmistakable garb of his calling. The latter seemed to be exhorting and warning his companions and the captive in front of him even as he made his difficult way over the ruts and stones of the road. The magistrate and others near by listened with some degree of attention, but the ragged louts and lads on the outskirts of the crowd of followers kept up a constant shouting and jeering and groaning that must have made it impossible for any to understand a word of the preacher's discourse.

No sooner had Myles observed these things than a terrible foreboding assailed him as to the nature of this company and its errand. He was witness of a horrible thing, the like of which he had heard or read of but by good fortune had never yet seen. Now it was possible to distinguish some of the shouts of the rabble:

"Sorcerer!—"Devil's cozener!" "Go drink thy master's health."—"Yah! Witchcat!"

In an instant Myles' resolution was taken. Drawing rein at five paces' distance, he called out:

"Ho, there! What do you with this man? Is he a prisoner?"

Myles' dress and arms clearly indicated an officer

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of the army, and his demeanor was commanding. The company hesitated and stopped, and those in the lead looked to one another to make reply to this challenger. At length the magistrate spoke:

"He is indeed, sir. He is a practicer of Witchcraft and the Black Art. We go now to end his wickedness and his service of Satan, his master, in the pool yonder."

"I thought as much," answered Myles steadily, though pity and disgust and anger raged and fought within him. "But know you not, poor ignorant man, that all such charges are but wild imaginings—that the poor creatures whom you hang or drown are more likely *victims* of misfortune than causers of it? What now has this man done that you really *know* as cause for this proceeding?"

The magistrate's face had grown fiery red while Myles was speaking; and he drew a deep breath for a full broadside in reply; but the minister sprang forward the instant Myles had done and in a shrill and angry voice addressed the horseman:

"Who are you, impious man, that thus disputes the findings of learned ministers and reverend magistrates? You shall suffer for it, believe me, be you ever so high in this world's rank and goods and howsoever blown up with worldly pride. I tell you this man, with his evil enchantments borrowed from the arts of Satan, has brought the sickness on all the flocks and herds of his neighbors here so that they

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die with black frothings at their mouths; and he has cursed their fields of corn so that the same foul froth appears where should be honest grain. And the children of our good neighbor Jeremy the Smith, have fallen to crazy antics, twisting and frothing like all those so bewitched, but pointing at this man's house as the source of their bewitching. Now will you say that all this is vain imaginings? Fie upon you for a denier of the faith! If you persist in such sayings you stand yourself in danger."

"All this is but madness and raving," declared Myles. "Ye have charged him with these things and made yourselves believe your charges. If trial there has been, I'll warrant that was the fashion of it."

"Child of the Devil!" screamed the preacher, frantically waving a bony fist toward his gainsayer. "I tell you he has *confessed* these hideous things, and that he was tempted to them by Satan himself. *Now* what say you of wild imaginings?"

Myles started back aghast, and for a moment knew not what to say or do. But at that instant was heard the voice of the accused—a pitiable voice indeed, cracked and broken with age and weakness, yet shrill with terror and eagerness:

"Oh, sir! Oh, good master! It was under the thumbscrews I confessed. I could not do otherwise, nor could you nor any other man. It was so dreadful that I would have sworn to the murder of my sainted mother if that would gain me release. I never harmed

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their flocks, indeed, sir, nor did any of these things of which they accuse me."

Then in the breast of Myles Delaroche welled up a mighty and uncontrollable rage. Torture! the thumb-screws!—used in the name of Justice in the land where he had dreamed that men should be free! His head was a seething furnace: his eyes shot fire. His muscles set themselves and his teeth were bared like those of a tiger that crouches for a spring. Snatching his sword from its sheath, he seized it by the blade and whirled its hilt about his head. Once—twice he struck like the leaping lightning, and the burly constables went down as though smitten by the bolt itself. The magistrate proved not such a ready victim. At Myles' first onslaught he had leaped back out of reach and had drawn a flintlock pistol from his belt. He now levelled this at the breast of the horseman and pulled the trigger.

Had it not been for the prisoner, Myles would surely have been slain. With his hands tied before him, the old man might have been thought entirely helpless; but as the pistol was raised he leaped before the justice and, violently swinging up both arms, knocked the weapon into the air just as it was discharged, so that the bullet went harmlessly toward the sky. Then as Myles wheeled toward them, both magistrate and preacher turned and ran, leaving the prisoner in the middle of the road.

Myles turned and cut with his sword the rope that

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bound the old man's wrists and was stooping to address some question to him when a shower of stones came from the villagers who had gathered in two parties on either side of the road. One of these missiles, of the size of a man's fist, struck Myles in the shoulder and nearly threw him from his horse. Another bruised the cheek of the accused man and drew a spurt of blood.

In the face of this vicious attack, Myles hesitated no longer to use his weapon as against armed men. Sword in hand, he spurred his horse directly toward the larger of the two groups of missile throwers, and in an instant was among them. They scattered in all directions with shrieks of terror, and Myles refrained from any strokes that might have proved deadly. The other group was driven helter-skelter in the same manner; and when the rescuer returned to the old man's side the road was clear before them.

Both of the fallen constables were now stirring and moaning, and Myles was glad to note that their wide felt hats had so far shielded their heads from the handle of his sword as to save their hurts from being mortal. But in the distance some of the villagers were gathering fresh supplies of stones, and he realized that if he would save the prisoner he must act quickly.

"Climb up behind me," he shouted to the accused one.

The old man obeyed at once, showing a readiness

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and agility quite surprising in one of his years. Myles put spurs to his horse, and the two quickly passed out of sight of their pursuers. A few minutes later they had ridden through the village and emerged on the open ground beyond.

Without a word to each other they rode past cottages and farms, the good horse cantering steadily with his double burden. Ten miles from the village the road entered a thick wood, and there the accused man broke silence to say that he was now safe from pursuit and ready to alight and make his way alone.

"I'll go through the wood a mile or two," he said, "and reach the road that leads to Leamington. There I have friends and will be safe, for 'tis forty miles and more, and none come there from Benlow way."

"How came you to be thus accused of witchcraft?" asked Myles, as the old fellow stood in the road by his side, endeavoring to find fitting words of thanks for his rescue.

"Why! I was no more guilty of the deeds they laid to me than a babe unborn!" exclaimed the villager, whom Myles now saw to be a person of some education and by no means the simple rustic he had supposed. "But when I was a lad I was at Tiverton School and had my chance at learning. It was not much I got, but 'twas enough so that for twenty years I was schoolmaster at Benlow there. And I was always reading books of old time medicine and such-like lore such as no one else in the town could master.



MILES PUT SPURS TO HIS HORSE AND THE TWO QUICKLY PASSED
OUT OF SIGHT OF THEIR PURSUERS.

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From them and in other ways I picked up some knowledge of doctoring and the ways of animals and crops—the blights and diseases that spoil them and ways to cure them. The people there could understand nothing of this, so at last they said I practiced the Black Art. They gave me the name of sorcerer, and took away my place at the school. Since that time I have made my living on a little farm there; and 'tis true my cows and sheep and my fields of wheat did not suffer from the blight and smut as did those of my neighbors, because, as to many of such things, I knew how to deal with them to prevent them. And I would have done as much for others too, but when I offered they drove me away with curses, saying all my power was from the Evil One. So for a year or two I have kept by myself and had no traffic with my neighbors. And meanwhile their herds and their fields have been much beset, so that last year and through the winter there has been a bitter dearth in the village. As for the blacksmith's children, they are afflicted with the falling sickness, such as has been known here and there for centuries and that has naught to do with charms and spells or any works of the Evil One."

"I believe you," said Myles. "I knew 'twas something of the sort was at the root of this. And furthermore—they may call me impious if they will—but I believe the stories of all these witch-baitings would be very like to this, if we might fully hear them."

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“ ’Tis so, I’ll swear,” cried the other. “I have heard of many instances like to mine, and also—I can tell you, as a man whose eyes are open, what I would not dare to say to others—I have read many of the secret books of what they call sorcery and astrology and the Black Art. One of them was found at my house, and made a part of their evidence against me. But, believe me, sir, they are naught but gibberish, put together by quacks and frauds for the mystifying of simple souls and the getting of their gold. The whole matter is quackery and delusion.”

“I am more than ever glad,” said Myles, “that it has been my fortune to assist a man who has such knowledge, and who, if people would but listen to him might do much good in the world. But I fear that the time is not yet here for the acceptance of such words, and that he who utters them publicly is in imminent danger of the gallows or the drowning pool. But now have you means for your journey? I would not have you seized as a vagabond.”

The old man chuckled softly and pulled from his pocket a small handful of gold pieces.

“Oh, aye. I have enough and to spare,” he cried. “My precious neighbors found this gold on me when they dragged me forth from my house. But none of them dared take the pieces for fear they might carry evil spells. So they thrust them back in

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my pockets and meant they should be sunk with me to the bottom of the Willow Pool. Now they'll serve me finely till I can make a new start for earning."

"Good!" said Myles warmly. "'Tis good to see you're not utterly bereft. And now I bid you God-speed and a safe ending to your journey. But this I say in parting: Remember henceforth what things it was that brought this persecution down on you, and avoid them straightly. You've been quite near enough to death for this cause."

"Oh, fear me not," said the old man, earnestly. "'Tis an experience that needs not to be repeated; and I will use all caution. Now God's blessing on you, sir, for a brave and a generous man. People of your sort should rule in England; if they did so, 'twould be a happy land. If there's any virtue in the prayers of one so poor and luckless as I am, your path henceforth shall be strewn with good fortune, you shall have friendship and love and the blessings of those who follow you. Were I indeed a worker of magic, such a fortune for you would be the first spell I'd weave."

As he uttered the last of these words, the speaker waved his hand in farewell and disappeared into the undergrowth. After a searching look behind to be sure that none had followed them from Benlow, Myles struck spurs to his horse and rode away at a canter in the direction of Belford and Grimsby. The air

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was brighter ; the birds sang in the boughs overhead, and, whether or not as a result of the old man's blessing, Myles heavy heart was strangely lightened. The sun had forced its way through thinning clouds, and the forest road was aglow with the colors of spring.

CHAPTER XXIV

CEDRICSWOLD

FOUR days thereafter Myles rode up the path to Grimsby Manor, and was warmly greeted by all the family who came forth to meet him. His brother John moved but slowly and limpingly indeed. He had had a fall from his horse a week before, resulting in some sprains and bruises from which he was as yet but partially recovered. As soon as greetings were exchanged, Elizabeth Meldrum, with an anxious wifely manner at which John's mother smiled, began urging her husband-to-be to return to the great armchair in the hall, saying that he might take cold in the foggy air and that they all could talk with Myles more fittingly within the house. So the whole party moved within doors, Mistress Delaroche fairly hanging on the arm of her younger son.

Seated before the great fireplace, Myles told them of his futile journey to London, the gloom of the city after the execution of the King, his own vain efforts to secure united action from the more liberal officers of the army, and finally of his stormy interview with the Puritan General.

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‘My faith!’ cried John, after hearing of Cromwell’s threatening words at the close, “you did well to ride away at once. I’ll warrant a squad of dragoons went seeking you within the hour after you left Whitehall. And I am not so sure but they’ll be sent even here to seize you. Did any know which way you rode?”

“None,” answered Myles. “I left my few belongings at the inn, thinking it better to lose them than my liberty. And I wished mightily to tell you, John, of the plight of our uncle and cousin. My thought is that you may prevail with General Fairfax where I failed so sadly with Cromwell. Fairfax has always looked on you with favor. Can you undertake it, think you?”

“Why! I will surely undertake it as soon as I can ride, which may be a week or so from now. They are our kinsfolk, by marriage at least, and ’tis as much my place as yours to assist them.”

“Right!” exclaimed Sir Anton. “We must not leave our kin in such a strait if aught we may do can relieve them. But I am of the same mind as John with respect to Cromwell and his further doings. Did you meet any on the road, Myles, who knew you and might carry word to London of the way you had taken?”

“No,” answered Myles slowly, “but I had one passage with a magistrate and constables on Benlow Heath that might show my road to any that inquired

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after me, and which, I fear will not better my standing with our present rulers.”

Then he related the tale of the meeting with the witchbaiters and the rescue of the old man from their clutches. When he had finished, all were silent for a moment while they looked in dismay at one another. Then Sir Anton said, gravely:

“I would not have had you do otherwise, Myles, though ’twas a rash and desperate thing, and ’tis the greatest wonder that you came through unscathed. But this is as bad as the other for your future safety. I know not whether Cromwell is a believer in witchcraft, but full many of those who surround him make of it an article of faith as sacred as any they hold. They’ll wish to hunt you down as an encourager of sorcery—the more so because if what you say is true, it makes them out to be fools and dullards for believing in witches’ spells. They’ll take your life if they can, and in doing so will assert, and even believe, that they do God service. We must get you out of England forthwith. Until these matters have overblown no place in the kingdom will be safe for you.”

“’Tis so, Myles,” said Mistress Delaroche, most earnestly. “You must take ship for France, and remain for a year or two till these things are something forgotten.”

“It hardly seems to me,” said Myles, “that it can be necessary to fly from the country in that fashion. I have committed no crime.”

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"Oh!" cried John, "'tis not what you have done in these days that will send you to prison and maybe to worse. I tell you, if you stay in England, Cromwell will never rest till you are behind locked doors."

So for half an hour the discussion went on, all the family joined in warning Myles of his danger and instancing many who had already fallen victims to the fanatic zeal of the Commonwealth leaders. At last, and half against his will, it was arranged that he should ride in three days' time with Captain Dempster of Belford, a shipmaster whose vessel was now loading in the Severn and would sail for Havre the following week. His father and brother united in urging Myles to remain closely at Grimsby in the meantime, and to be seen as little as possible by the neighbors, so that the news of his being there should not be sent abroad. Elizabeth Meldrum, who for some weeks had been staying at the home of her aunt in Belford Village, now offered to observe any arrivals there and to send word of any messengers who arrived from London and who might bear warrants calling for action against Myles by the local authorities.

These arrangements made, Elizabeth rode away toward the village, and John and Myles made their way to a point near the barns whence could be had a full view of the green meadows and wide grain fields in the valley that had been Mallard Fen.

For an hour and more they talked of the things

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that might be done in future years for the further development of the Manor Farm and the protection of its woodlands. Then, the dinner hour having arrived, they returned to the house, and were just seating themselves at the board when Mistress Delaroche sprang up with a cry of alarm and pointed to a horse and rider that were emerging from an old wood road at the back of a pasture a furlong away.

"Look!" she cried, "'Tis Elizabeth returning by the wood path. Whatever has happened now?"

They had not long to wait for an explanation, for Elizabeth came across the pasture ground at a gallop, and they all hurried out to meet her. As soon as she came near she began speaking in a low tone, but with her voice tense with excitement:

"Myles cannot wait for the French ship. He must leave at once—*to-day*."

"Oh, Elizabeth! What have you heard?" cried Mistress Delaroche.

"As I rode into the square at Belford, there came from Shrewsbury way a Parliament officer and half a dozen soldiers, riding horses much worn with traveling. I lingered near the inn door to learn of their business; and the first the officer uttered was a question as to the whereabouts of Grimsby Manor. Then, when he had been directed, he and one of the men talked about the horses—whether they could make the farther journey here, without rest and feeding. At last the soldier convinced him that 'twould be best to

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halt at the inn for an hour or two lest some of their mounts be foundered with hard riding. When I had heard that much, I turned about, and, riding through the lanes and fields and then the wood road, made shortest time on my return. But they will be here in an hour—or in two at most.”

“Myles, you must go at once,” cried his mother, with tears streaming down her face. “I doubt not Cromwell has your name at this moment on his lists of Malignants.”

“Aye,” agreed Sir Anton, “there’s no time to lose. But I know not for the life of me which way you should ride. There are soldier companies in all the towns; and if they have such orders, they will arrest you on sight. ’Tis perilous for you to remain in England for a day; and our ship does not sail for a week or more.”

“*I* know what he shall do,” declared John, eagerly, his eyes alight with a new resolution. “There is a vessel sails from Liverpool but two days hence that’s bound for Boston on Massachusetts Bay. By hard riding, Myles may board her, and be safe on the open sea even while they post these lists about here demanding his arrest.”

“And at Boston I might take service under the Colony, I suppose,” said Myles.

“Nay, never!” cried John. “You shall not linger at Boston, but go straight on to Cedricswold. And you shall go as owner of that goodly grant—no less—

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for I will here and now make deed to you of all my rights therein."

"But how can I accept such a gift?" asked Myles. "Cedricswold took five years and more of your labor, with hardship and danger added. Will you give all this up to me because now I am somewhat beset? 'Tis more than I can take, John."

"Listen!" said John earnestly. "During many of those years I toiled at Cedricswold you did the like at Grimsby here. Grimsby is my heritage, by strict entail; and you have by your work and planning more than doubled its worth. Now I make over Cedricswold in fair return. Moreover, Elizabeth has many times besought me to remain in England; and in doing this I yield to her wish also."

Myles looked to his father, and the old baronet nodded emphatically. "'Tis just," he said. "'Tis no more than your due."

John turned about and hurried into the house. Seizing paper and pen, he proceeded to write and sign a quitclaim in his brother's favor to all the lands of Cedricswold. Meanwhile Sir Anton had gone to the stables to order the saddling of a fresh horse, and Mistress Delaroche and Elizabeth were stowing a knapsack with clothing and keepsakes.

Ere a quarter of an hour had passed Myles had embraced his mother in farewell, wrung the hands of his father and John and Elizabeth, and was riding through

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a wood-path toward a little-traveled road on the other side of Grimsby lands. Gaining this, he made all speed toward the north and west. At daybreak he halted at a little inn at Ramshill, forty miles from Belford.

CHAPTER XXV

WESTWARD HO

HAVING accomplished more than half of the journey to the seaport, Myles thought it well to stay at the inn till mid-afternoon in order that his horse might be as fresh as possible for another night ride. He had met no soldiers on the road thus far, but this he attributed to his having made most of his journey from Grimsby under the cover of darkness. And now he counted on the same advantage for the remainder of his ride, thinking to come into Liverpool in the early morning and to board the waiting vessel unobserved.

But the roads in this part of the country were unfamiliar to him, and they curved and crooked about bewilderingly. For the most part Myles avoided asking his way, trusting to his own keen sense of direction and to the indications afforded by the westering sun. The result was that he added fifteen or twenty miles to his road by taking wrong turnings at the cross-roads, and when darkness came he was still an unknown distance from his destination.

A slight unsteadiness in his horse's gait caused him to dismount and look to the animal's feet and thus

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to learn that somewhere on the road a shoe had been cast. The track was rough and stony; and the hoof was already somewhat broken, so that Myles quickly concluded that the shoe must be replaced before many more miles were covered, else the horse might be seriously lamed.

At the next village he inquired for the smith, and found him, after some searching, in a tumbledown cottage at the end of a dark and narrow lane. At first the man refused to reopen his shop, saying surlily that his work was done for the day and that he would shoe no more horses for any man. But the display of a coin that was thrice his usual fee brought a change in his manner, and presently he came shambling down the rickety steps of his dwelling and proceeded to unbar the door of the shop. Then for the first time it became apparent that he was much the worse for drink, almost helpless indeed and barely able to stand. Trying to work the bellows to revive the dying coals of the forge, he soon was hanging from the handle like a drowning man on a floating spar. His customer decided that the work such a man would do on a horse's hoof would be more likely to lame the poor beast than to help him.

But Myles had once or twice shod one of his own horses under the tutelage of the old smith at Belford, and he now determined to make use of the knowledge thus gained. Elbowing the reeling smith from his way, he rekindled the fire, and, taking such tools as

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were necessary from the bench, set to work to prepare the hoof. Then he selected a shoe from the pile beside the anvil, heated and shaped it and nailed it in place. The work thus done, if not as smoothly finished as that of a capable smith, was equally serviceable. Half an hour after entering the shop, Myles tossed the promised coin to the drunkard and mounted and rode away.

In the meantime the night had grown as black as pitch and a thin rain had begun to fall. There could be no question of taking shelter for the night, for Myles did not know at what hour the tide would serve for the vessel's sailing, and it might prove to be in the early morning. So he determined to push on, and to depend on chance meetings with other travelers for guidance.

It so happened that none such were abroad on the roads, and Myles drove on half-blindly through the rain and mist and past sleeping cottages and farmsteads, until at midnight, arriving at a small town, he was forced to stop at the inn to inquire his way. The sleepy hostler told him he was thirty miles from Liverpool, and thus revealed to Myles that he had been for hours circling his goal without approaching it. With a clearer notion of his road the drenched and weary horseman set out once more, and when the sun rose found himself within five or six miles of the town.

Spurring his tired horse forward, he soon covered

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the remaining distance and was riding through the few streets and lanes that clustered near the water's edge. Now he could see the masts and spars of vessels, and had no further need for directions.

Presently he came to the head of a dock, and had the broad pool of the Mersey outspread before him. Then his heart leaped up in his throat, for the largest of all the vessels there was already three hundred yards from the shore and was moving steadily seaward. This was a brig with the high bow and stern that had been described to him. As he spurred recklessly along the rough planking of the wharf the craft swung slowly around and he could see clearly lettered on the stern the name that left no doubt as to her identity. The ship bound for Boston had weighed anchor at sunrise; and he was too late by half an hour.

Half a dozen dockmen and loungers were scattered about the wharf. Myles threw himself from his horse and shouted to the one who happened to be nearest:

"I must board that vessel. Have you not a boat in which we may overtake her?"

The dockman—a grizzled old fellow of sixty—turned his head slowly and looked after the retreating ship. Then he answered deliberately:

"I'd say no, sir. She's much too far. You should have come at sunrise."

Myles stamped his foot in keen impatience.

"So I would have done if in any way it could have

been managed. But now look, my man. Here's my horse with saddle and bridle that shall be yours if you put me aboard. Speak quickly."

The dockman turned to a younger companion.

"What say, Jem? Can we fetch it, think you?"

"Coom," said Jem eagerly, "we'll make it, man. 'Tis fair boat hire he offers."

Running down a stairway at the side of the dock, Jem pulled a four-oared boat from beneath and began untying the rope that fastened her. Before this was accomplished, Myles was in his place in the stern and the older dockman was at his oars. In a moment the two boatmen had pushed off and were pulling with long and steady strokes toward the brig. The wind was light, but the vessel was sailing straight away from them, and for five minutes or more they seemed to Myles to make not the least gain upon her. Then she came about on the other tack, and the oarsmen headed for a point two miles away where they hoped to intercept her. For the next few minutes they made good headway, but the vessel tacked for the second time while they were still a hundred yards astern.

Myles stood up and waved his hat and shouted; but, although several men were to be seen about the rail, no one on board paid any heed to his calls and signals. The speed of the brig was now fully equal to that of the boat; and the oarsmen were already tiring. Presently the older man stopped rowing with a sigh.

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"We canna make it, master," he said.

"Here!" shouted Myles to the younger rower. "Let me have your place. And you sit by him and take one of his oars. We'll overtake them yet."

Crawling over the thwarts, Myles seized the rear pair of oars while the two dockmen prepared to row as he bade them. Soon all three were pulling with swift and powerful strokes that made the boat seem to leap through the water. The distance between it and the ship visibly lessened. The sweat poured down the faces of all the oarsmen, for now they rowed as in a race for highest stakes. Moment by moment they gained on the ship. Seeing that they must win or lose within the next few minutes, Myles still further quickened his stroke and the elder dockman uttered some needed words of warning lest he break an oar with his tremendous pulling and lose them the prize.

When again the steersman of the brig prepared to tack, he waved a hand to the occupants of the boat and called out some words of praise for their hardihood. The mate let down a rope ladder from the waist; and the boat ran closely under it. Myles leaped up and seized the rounds. A moment later he had climbed safely over the rail.

The mate was occupied with urgent matters about the deck, and Myles stood for some minutes recovering his breath and watching the skillful handling of the ship that had just entered the outer channel. Then he bethought himself of the necessity for interviewing

the captain and making due arrangements for his passage. With this intention he was climbing the stairway toward the afterdeck, when he heard a loud and angry voice which seemed to be replying to some question or protest which had not reached Myles' ears.

"I tell you, sir, you must pay passage money if you are to sail on my ship. If you have come aboard without it, you shall even go back whence you came."

By this time Myles had reached the deck and could see the burly captain near the taffrail and the persons whom he was addressing. These were a thin and bent old man in worn and faded velvet garments and a young woman, likewise meanly clad, who stood erect beside him, half supporting him with her arm. Both of these would-be passengers stood with their backs toward Myles, so that he caught no glimpse of their faces. Now the old man was speaking—in a thin and quavering voice and with piteous breaks in his utterance:

"But, captain, do I not tell you—we are close friends of Sir Robert Payne—who is now a magistrate in Boston. He will pay you the money—for our passage—readily enough. He will do so, I am certain."

"Have you a paper signed by him that sayeth so?" demanded the captain.

"No," answered the old man distressfully. "He knows not yet of our coming—but he will pay you. That I know. He cannot do otherwise—for old times' sake."

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"Ho!" grunted the seaman, "I know full well how much old times' sake is worth—and that is nothing at all in gold or silver coin. But I have other things to do than thus to stand chaffering. I'll send you back with the pilot when he leaves us. 'Tis my last word."

Then the young woman spoke, and Myles was thrilled by the tones of a well-remembered voice. Deeper it was than when he had last heard it, some five years before, and with a note of sadness that was new to him. But he knew it at once for that of Lucy Dalrymple, his playmate of old days in London and his fearless champion before the grim Puritan leader.

"Captain," she was saying while she stretched forth her hand containing two small objects of gold, "will not this bracelet and this ring be security for our passage money? Their value is not great in money, perhaps; but they were my mother's; and you may be sure I will make every effort to redeem them."

As he looked at the baubles thus offered, the captain's face took on a look of fierce contempt; but before he could reply Myles Delaroche had stepped forward and placed himself at Lucy's side.

"Captain," he cried joyously, "tell me the amount of this passage money, and I will pay it you, along with my own."

"And who may you be, sir?" asked the shipmaster in bewilderment.

"I am the man who, intending to take passage on

your vessel, was so delayed as nearly to have been left behind. I came up the side but five minutes since."

"Oho!" exclaimed the captain, "so you are the man who would have had me lay to, with a wind and tide like this while you overtook me. You'll learn, perchance, to be an earlier riser when you'd sail to the other side of the earth. Well, you are aboard at last. And do you say you'll pay the passage money for these people?"

"Aye, and at once," answered Myles, drawing a well filled purse from his pocket. "If you'll tell me the amount, we can quickly come to a settlement."

"Myles Delaroche!" cried Lucy. "What do you here, in Heaven's name?"

"The selfsame thing as you, dear cousin," responded Myles, gayly, "and you, sir," he added, turning to James Dalrymple with a bow. "I take passage for American in the good ship *Beacon*."

The poor old gentleman was speechless with bewilderment, but he wrung Myles' hand with a will, while tears of joy at this deliverance ran down his wrinkled countenance. The captain quickly despatched his business with Myles and took himself to another portion of the deck, leaving his passengers to themselves. Presently Myles found a bench where all three might sit while they told each other of their recent fortunes, of the events which had driven them aboard the *Beacon* and of such plans as they had for life in America.

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A hasty note was written to John Delaroche, telling of Myles' embarking and of the safety of James Dalrymple and Lucy. This was despatched by the returning pilot and arrangements were made for its forwarding from Liverpool by special messenger.

Then, during the long forenoon, the three exiles, happy in the fortune which had reunited them, sat in converse, grave and gay, while the shores of England faded away behind them.

Thereafter followed many bright and peaceful days, filled with such quiet happiness as Myles had not known for years. The winds were fair, the skies for the most part blue and smiling, and they met no dangerous gales. Old James Dalrymple, relieved for the time of his burden of care and apprehension, was well content to sit for hours together on the bench near the taffrail, watching the snowcaps on the dancing waves. Meanwhile Myles and Lucy walked the deck or hung over the rail, absorbed in grave converse on the present and future of England and in happier anticipations of the new land toward which they were journeying.

In spite of the hardships and dangers among which she had lived for the past several years, Lucy had become a tall and beautiful woman—her figure rounded with the graceful curves of early maturity and her black eyes no less bright, though something graver and more understanding than those of the hoyden maid of Surrey Lane. But it was the growth of her

mind that most surprised and charmed her companion. Always of a quick apprehension and ready sympathy, Lucy had developed an understanding of the world of men and affairs such as was rare indeed among young women of any station and which was to Myles a revelation and a delight. Many otherwise empty hours at the homes of her Cavalier friends had been filled with reading and musing, and she had lost no opportunity for discussion of the great issues of the time with active-minded men and women of any party. Myles found to his great surprise that Lucy knew as much of history and of forms of government as he did himself, and that for any of the opinions she held on these subjects she was fully able to give a logical reason.

No other woman he had known, with the single exception of his mother, had ever shown a like interest in national affairs. Lucy's thought had developed long since beyond the blind belief in the House of Stuart which would be her father's faith as long as he lived; but Myles soon found that she weighed the pretensions of Parliament and Commonwealth in the same critical scale. High sounding phrases that had not behind them a genuine intent for the public good now moved her only to scorn or to laughter that had in it something of the impish mirth of olden days. But she remained, nevertheless an idealist—one who looked to the future for better things than the world had yet seen—a believer in the progress to be achieved through

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the brave hearts and unfettered minds of the newer day.

One evening, some five or six weeks after they had left Liverpool, the captain surprised them all by announcing that, if the wind held, they might expect to come in sight of land by daybreak or soon after. They were already near the point of Cape Cod, and would soon be in Massachusetts Bay. With good fortune they would land in Boston before another night.

Myles went to his bed with his mind filled with a strange excitement. He was like a boy on the brink of some great adventure that seems to dwarf all his other experience. He slept but fitfully, and before the earliest light of dawn was out on the deck, gazing intently into the darkness ahead.

His vigil had not long continued before he heard light steps behind him and turned to see Lucy approaching.

"I, too, must see America as soon as I can," she said, with a laugh that failed to hide her excitement. "I have not slept for hours."

"There's naught but sea and cloud thus far," answered Myles warmly, "but I can better wait here than in my bed. Perchance we shall not see the land though till the sun is well risen."

"We shall wait then for a good hour yet. The east is still as black as midnight."

"Aye, but there's a thick bank of cloud there that

WESTWARD HO

hides the sunrise. See how the stars fade overhead, and how the sails are already lightening."

"'Tis so," answered Lucy, breathlessly. "Morning is already in the sky overhead. There is a sea gull, sailing in the sunlight, with snow-white breast and wings."

For a moment both were silent. Then suddenly Myles flung out his hand toward the northwestern horizon and cried:

"Oh, look! Is not that land, far ahead and to the right? It seems too firm for cloud."

Lucy made no reply, but for some minutes stood gazing where he had pointed. Gradually the dark shape beyond the blue-black waters grew clearer, its contour became definite and fixed, unlike the cloud forms that momentarily shifted and paled. At last Myles spoke again:

"It is America."

"Yes," said Lucy, softly, "the land of the future."

Myles slowly turned about and for long stood gazing at the eastern cloud bank beyond which lay the land for which he had worked and fought and dreamed, the land that held the graves of his boyhood friends and of his youthful hopes.

Lucy looked up quickly and seemed to read his thought.

"Dear Myles," she said, "we come to a new England—one that in good time may become a happier land than that which we have left. You have toiled

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and fought for years in hope of a better day for our country, and now at the end are fleeing from new tyrants who have seized upon the fruits of your victories. But even so you have little cause to be downhearted. The work you have done cannot be lost, for you and others like you are *the torch bearers* who, marching far in advance of your comrades, have given to the world a new vision. It may be that in this great new land—this America—there will one day arise a state where, under wise and equal laws, men shall at last be free. We may not live to see it—I've thought many times that your ideas were such as in our day could not be realized anywhere—but perhaps some of our blood will do so in a happier time to come. And of that glorious future state, you, Myles Delaroche, are a founder."

Myles turned and for a moment gazed at the earnest face of his companion while a wave of happiness, such as he had never known, surged up within him. Her small brown hand lay on the rail, and he covered it with his.

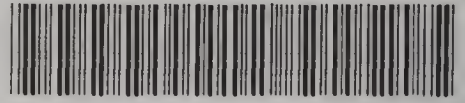
"Lucy," he said hoarsely, "will you share my fortunes in this land of a new promise?"

For answer Lucy lifted her other hand and gave it to him also. While thus they stood the rising sun emerged from the cloud that shrouded the eastern horizon and gilded the summits of the green hills on the shores of America.

(1)

THE END

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